

Mutual Aid Universities

Edited by
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this series is to provide a forum of discussion for the whole field of adult and continuing education. With increasing pressure on traditional areas of secondary and higher education and changing employment patterns, there is a growing awareness that the continuing education of adults has a vital role to play in our society. All the books in the series are about radical thinking and practice in education in Britain and abroad. The authors are concerned with education in its widest sense, and, by implication, with the inadequacy of traditional views of education as a process which concerns only the young and which takes place only in the formal sectors.

A major focus of the series is on the consequences of social change and the need to formulate an educational response to new technologies and new economic, social and political conditions as they affect all members of our society. The growth and distribution of knowledge is rapidly making traditional models of education obsolete, and new learning technologies are being developed which give a greater potential than ever before to the possibilities of education as an instrument of social change, but only if we change radically our conceptions of education itself and adopt a critical view of the uses to which it could be put.

At the same time that educational ideals become more attainable through the growth of knowledge and learning technologies, economic, social, political, sexual and racial conflicts remain undiminished and often find expression in educational inequalities and injustices. The series aims to explore this paradox, to identify obstacles in the way of realising the full potential of education for all and to describe some of the initiatives being taken in the United Kingdom and abroad to try to overcome them.

In a society preoccupied with the young and obsessed with education as the prerogative of children and youth, there is no

thrust more intriguing in present adult education circles than the sudden interest in education and older people. Beginning from a parlous situation, where, at any given time, only some one or two per cent of Britain's ten million over-sixties are involved in any form of education, the scope is, obviously unlimited. Probably the most interesting development in this field has been the rise in Britain of a University of the Third Age movement which has proved to be different in form from the original European model.

This book in the first to explore the early history and philosophy of this new phenomenon which refuses, in Eric Midwinter's phrase, 'either to bow the knee to soulless public bureaucracy or open the purse for avid commercial agencies'. Eric Midwinter, the editor of this compendium of essays on both the theory behind and the application of the U3A idea, has been previously connected with community education and the mutual aid movements. He was Director of the Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project and educational consultant to the Home Office Community Development Projects, and later he was Head of the Public Affairs Unit of the National Consumer Council, with a responsibility for various self-help initiatives. Since 1980 he has been Director of the Centre for Policy on Ageing, where he has brought education to the forefront of attention, especially with his policy study 'Age is Opportunity; education and older people', published by C. P. A. in 1982. As General Secretary of the National Committee of the University of the Third Age, he is the most appropriate person to edit this book.

The U3A experiment represents a complex of ideas and raises a variety of questions, all of which are addressed in the book. Peter Laslett, doyen of the U3A movement in Britain, wryly wonders about the establishment's 'puzzling unwillingness to recognise the fact that education is a life-long interchange between those who do know and can, and those who need to know, and be able'. Michel Philibert, speaking from the vast authority of his involvement with French U3As, impishly asks whether these new bodies will be 'rear guard' or 'avant-garde'. David Radcliffe, of the University of Western Ontario, Canada, offers a discerning description of the state of play internationally while Paula Allman, the leading expert on the learning processes of older people, analyses not pedagogy, but andragogy, which 'assumes that learning is synonymous with thinking, rather than acquiring knowledge'. John Rennie, Director of the Community Education Development Centre, raises the question of community education, reminding us that the peer-group approach of community education and, within that concept, U3As is about breaking away

from paternalism, and striving for a collaborative and collegial relationship', requiring 'a more enlightened, more demanding and ultimately enhanced role for the professional'. Michael Young, perhaps Britain's most successful social entrepreneur since World War II, urges, from the self-help standpoint, the need for 'maximum local autonomy but backed up by a small national organisation which fosters an information co-operative for every locality'.

Against this formidable backdrop of analysis and commentary, the actual players then reenact their practical roles. Dianne Norton, Executive Secretary of the U3A National Committee and Convenor of the Forum for the Rights of Elderly People to Education (FREE) goes 'nationwide' in a detailed account of the growth of Britain's current crop of thirty or more U3A groups, with four representatives of these units adding their individual and varying testimonies.

Jo Campling
Series Editor

PART 1. THE GENERAL: BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1

UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE: THE ENGLISH VERSION

ERIC MIDWINTER

The out-and-out Chauvinist might rejoice in the United Kingdom's version of the University of the Third Age, for it seems to incorporate a medley of characteristics usually deemed peculiarly English. There is a mildly mocking air about its use of that somewhat portentous title. There is a stubborn refusal to be overly theoretical about its structure. There is a valid and stern determination to wax independent. There is a rugged air of suspicion about the infallibility of authority. It certainly adds up to what, on a twilit evening and with the light behind it, might be called flexibility, but is perhaps nearer what Anglo-Saxons are wont disarmingly to refer to as 'muddle'. It might, at the onset, be helpful to tease out the meanings of these four aspects.

(A) A Portentous Title

First, as to the title. It is, of course, an unashamed burglary of the continental usage and reflects a genuine effort to align the British endeavour with the international activity. From its French beginnings some dozen years ago, the idea has spread to several countries, although, numerically, the emphasis remains in France, which has roughly two thirds the world's U3A's. The classic model is the identification of an organised body of older students with its local university, with, in each case, a contract negotiated with that institution for the provision of tutorial succour. The lesson of bargaining for what is required, as opposed to accepting meekly what is proffered, has not been lost on this side of the Channel, but, in effect, precious few British U3A's rely, wholly or partly, on institutional assistance of that kind.

The reasons for this are mixed, even contrary. The situation reflects the variegated pattern of adult and continuing education already in existence in Britain, with its mesh of

local authority, university extra-mural, Workers' Educational Association, Open University and other elements. But it also reflects the supposition that such agencies have either ignored, or are incapable of responding to, the needs of older people.

Thus, the title 'University of the Third Age' is deliberately used in two senses. On the one hand, it tries to boost the image of what should and can be provided for our older citizens. Whatever else, it is less demeaning than the labels of other services organised for that age group by the state: 'meals on wheels', 'home helps', 'day centres': these hardly have the exciting ring of colourful and mettlesome bustle. 'Third Age' is certainly a major improvement, for it avoids the wasting strictness of a chronological division. It refers to a phase of life rather than the accident of a birthday. It accepts that, after an opening 'age' of dependent childhood and education and a second 'age' of active economic and, for many, domestic and social involvement, a period follows, presaging the fourth stage of dependence and death, in which one is in fine fettle but with the major socio-economic commitments completed. It covers, then, not just the officially 'old' - the over-sixties or sixty-fives - but, for instance, the man unluckily made redundant in his fifties and with no prospect of other full-time employ; the non-working woman who has perhaps given prime years to the care of a sick relative; parents whose children have grown up and left home, and so forth. Of course, the distinction is less startlingly clearcut than with the appalling rigidity of, say, compulsory retirement on a given day, but it is, nonetheless, a genuine arc of most people's life-span.

On the other hand, there is a slight tongue-in-cheek feature about the deployment of the word 'university'. The studied inference is that the U3A is not one of your new-fangled, modern universities of the last hundred or so years, obsessed with weird epistemological divisions, with arbitrary notions of what constitutes scholarship, with a bizarre urge to grade and re-grade its clients in an atmosphere of false competitiveness, and with a fierce compulsion to maintain these mystiques for the supposed benefits of a tiny, privileged minority. The U3A, the inference continues, is of a purer, more ancient stamp. It returns to the older connotation of the early medieval university, with, in its ideal form, the concept of fellow-students joined together in the selfless pursuit of knowledge and truth for its own sake. In other words, the U3A cocks a perky snook at the conventional university, and, by implication, criticises it.

The U3A tag, has, however, caused difficulties in the public mind, and not merely among the choleric defenders of existing

universities, outraged at such a cavalier use of the sacred name. The difficulties have been, as difficulties often are, the other face of the advantages. The insouciant 'university' claim has, therefore, both attracted those in search of some kind of degree or qualification, anathema to the trueblooded U3A-er, and discouraged those who expected that U3A might prove just as precious and offputting as its statutory namesake. The former have had quietly to be directed elsewhere, and the latter persuaded that the outlook was not so grim as they had mournfully visualised.

Nonetheless, several local groups, because of such factors, have decided on their own nomenclature, while preserving the general principles of U3A-ship. The acronym itself has become, like UCD or LSE before it, acceptable and accepted. At least one local branch has decided to adhere to the abbreviation without making explicit for what it stands, just as, occasionally, one cannot always recall the full version of ICI, BOC, or UNICEF. The national umbrella body for the U3A's is, for example, registered for charitable purposes as the Third Age Trust. So the title of the movement has been the subject, like many titles, of grave debate. At the same time, that means, on the positive side, that it is an ebullient talking point, and it has to be said that no preferable generic name (as opposed to some splendid parochial instances) has been suggested.

(B) A Theoretical Frailty

That lengthy log of the passions evoked by the title is a correct reflection of what has never failed to cause argument. 'Third Age' is sometimes mistaken for 'Third World', as an additional complication, and, as several have severely remarked, it is an ill-advised label which requires such an elaborate explanation. It does offer, however, a tidy introduction to the second of those English 'peculiarities'; a wholesome suspicion of too pedantic a theoretical diktat. It has been said that, if the limerick had been created on the continent, then logical, latin academics would have insisted that the Edward Lear formula would have become the unbreakable mould, with, for instance, the fifth being a reprise of the first line, and the middle third and fourth phrases as strictly governed. In less rational hands, the form has, in fact, known wild excess; thus:

There once was a bard of Japan
Whose verses no one could scan
When asked why 'twas so
He said, 'yes, I know;

The main reason is because I try to get as many words into the last line as ever I possibly can'.

There would be no point denying that the U3A movement in Britain defiantly lacks a rigid form and that, indeed, it tries to get as many types into the running as ever it possibly can. The proliferation of sizes, shapes and styles is sufficient to cause some furiously to ponder whether there is any commonality at all. There are sizeable, quite highpowered versions; there are tiny, aimiable instances. One may cater for a township; another for a region. Some may have the backing of professional and institutional big guns, where, elsewhere, two or three individuals might be struggling to launch a U3A from someone's home.

The rightly celebrated Cambridge U3A was the first major enterprise, although one or two of the smaller brethren did actually organise meetings before the Cambridge launch at the Easter of 1982. An embryonic national committee was born at much the same time, when there were no more than half a dozen initiatives being contemplated, and, by the summer of 1983, when the third of a number of national seminars was organised, there were some thirty or forty groups, active or at an advanced stage of planning, in the field. At that juncture, the small committee was extended by election to seven, charitable status, with attendant financial benefits, was offered affiliate members, a news bulletin was planned and an annual meeting mounted.

Part 2 of this book describes, in general and by specific case-study, the history of the movement thus far, but that relation between centre and locality touches closely on the issue of theoretical structure, and warrants some examination. The two elements grew organically, and liaison between them was largely unforced. As local bodies formed, there was a natural desire to exchange ideas, and some kind of national clearing-house was welcome. Speakers, advisers, newsletters and even some small amounts of seed-money were made available centrally, with the help of the by no means excessive charitable funds at the national committee's disposal. Press and media coverage and appearances stimulated some public response, in terms of potential organisers as well as putative members, and this helped enormously. Nationally, a kit - 'U3A DIY' - was constructed from the early experience of pioneer groups, and this proved quite popular.

In this creakingly cyclic way, local groups grew in number and the central body grew in strength, to the point where a second part-time organiser, to act as a promulgator on a

countrywide basis as a complement to the present centrally based secretary and convenor, was being contemplated. A simple constitution emerged. Groups which wish to affiliate to the national league have the right to choose a representative to that central convention which, in turn, elects the national committee. In the solemn terms of the political scientist, the U3A movement is a confederation.

All of which says precisely nothing about the objectives of or criteria for membership. There is a tacit assumption, optimistic rather than naive, that groups which have contacted the central office and talked with one another know themselves whether they are U3A in character. It is hazardous. Already there has been a slightly embarrassing case of a dog-in-the-manger-ish outfit which, having collapsed itself, somehow managed to thwart temporarily a replacement venture in the same area. But it is consciously nebulous. Frankly, until groups have tried this or that technique and have learned by trial and error, it would be folly to whistle up a detailed theory of U3Ager and firmly insist that it be obeyed to the letter. Moreover, it is unlikely that so solid a structure will ever emerge, for it is already apparent, and as the case-studies in Part Two confirm, that there are many roads to Rome.

Self-evidently, a University of the Third Age is for older rather than younger persons, although, as the redundant forty year olds of the Devon branches pleasingly demonstrate, the term is comparative and not definitive. Beyond that, the primitive theory is best pronounced negatively. The U3A eschews standards of eligibility and avoids the establishment of qualifications. It maintains expenditure (not least, as its organisers would ruefully admit, through lack of choice) as low as possible, and only rarely pays tutorial salaries. It is not just about what is normally thought of as academic. Physical and recreational activities, as well as a broad gamut of intellectual pursuits, might be on offer, while, in some groups, research and the consideration of the issue of ageing in the United Kingdom are matters which are uppermost.

Perhaps the nearest approach to a theoretical pattern is to be found in the principles or guidelines included in the national committee's prospectus and which, originally, were devised by Peter Laslett, a chief founder of the movement in Britain and Chairman of the U3A in Cambridge. They run as follows:

i. The University of the Third Age shall consist of a body of persons who undertake to learn and to help others to learn. Those who teach will be encouraged also to learn and those who learn shall also teach, or in other ways assist in the functioning

of the institution - by, for instance, counselling other members, offering tuition and help to the housebound, bedridden and hospitalised, by assisting in research projects, by helping to provide intellectual stimulus for the mass of the elderly in Britain, by taking part in offers of manpower to educational and cultural institutions which may require this, such as art galleries, museums, libraries and so on. Secretarial and administrative or fund raising assistance would be an important function for those wanting to help the institution.

ii. Joining the University shall be a question of personal choice. No qualifications shall be required and no judgements made by the University of the Third Age as between applicants. The standards of the University should be those set by its individual classes and other activities, and the form taken by each individual pursuit shall be decided by members collaborating for this purpose.

iii. The curriculum of the University of the Third Age shall be as wide as its human and financial resources permit, but the preference of members will be the only criterion of what is done. Strong emphasis will be laid on research projects, on practical skills, on physical and allied leisure activities as well as on intellectual and academic pursuits. Insistence on learning as an end in itself will guide the decisions as to what activities to undertake.

These are the leading guidelines for the University of the Third Age, and the Committee has, in fact, agreed a more detailed format of twenty principles. Where a local group feel they can subscribe in general to those tenets, and where the national committee recognise, with equal tolerance, the group's good faith, there, then, is a U3A brought into being; for it is recognised in the scriptures that in my father's house there are many mansions.

(C) A Sturdy Independence

That broad church-ness is, in turn, a valid manifestation of the third feature under review, namely, the sturdy independence of each U3A in Britain. But that independence reflects much more than the benign refusal of the central body to impose an onerous dogma or, should it err in that officious direction, the local branches' potential to resist. The basic issue is that of self-regulation, and this independence is asserted not just of other branches or a national committee, but of other public providers. In practice, this varies substantially. Some U3A's have developed under the wing of a friendly institution, often at the bidding of an active and sympathetic tutor. Others have

puritanically put temptation behind them, even to the point of refusing to seek any form of public funding. Nonetheless, the former would claim that their powers of self-determination have not been usurped, that the discreet use of accommodation and clerical support has been indispensable to the foundation of a U3A, and that a close relationship between a statutory and a voluntary agency is mutually advantageous.

It has to be confessed that there is some contentiousness on the fringes of this issue. Put extremely, there are those who believe that any connection with the existing system is damaging, at least psychologically, while their opponents insist that the current service should be revised to cope more effectively with an older clientele. All agree that the system has failed elderly people disastrously. There is no sadder wryness in British education than the onset of mass leisure at retirement leading to an abrupt collapse in the take-up of educational chances. Only a handful, certainly less than 200,000 of Britain's ten million over-sixties, are, at any given time, involved in any kind of official education activity.

The reasons for this are as well-rehearsed as they are regrettable. Highly practical points, like the costly fees, the inadequacies of public transport, the security fears about the streets after dark, rub shoulders with deeply entrenched cultural prejudices, like the fatal association in the popular mind of education with youth and its sister myth, the automatic decline of mental faculties with age. Several of these important aspects will be elaborated in proper detail in later chapters, but the institutional dimension touches closely on the initial structure of U3As. The question amounts to the degree of culpability within existing institutions for a lamentable state of affairs whereby, plainly, those enthused by the notion of providing educational nurture for older people operate more or less from a standing start; that is, they must assume that, for all practical purposes, there is scarcely any provision at all.

The optimists urge that the universities and polytechnics and the local authority adult and continuing education agencies must be forced or persuaded to mend their ways and provide more realistically for a massive age-group, massively disadvantaged. They claim that it would be foolish to turn one's back on the resources available in the huge complex of British education, resources, indeed, purchased, especially in the post-war boom years, out of the taxes and rates of the very retired people who now receive hardly a jot or tittle of that bounty.

The pessimists are much less sanguine. They argue that

it is the very institutionalism of the existing agencies, and not just their lack of will or imagination, which makes them faulty in this regard. They are remote and divorced from ordinary humanity, and this particularly affects the older generation, most of them who left school at thirteen or fourteen, four-fifths with no qualifications whatever, and only one in twenty of whom, compared with almost four in twenty of the younger age-groups, has had higher educational experience. Disheartened by their past schooling and discouraged by their present perception of it, the argument runs, elderly people exhibit a marked distrust of the overweening formalism and narrowness of the public sector.

The U3A national committee has adopted a pluralistic stance. It is prepared to campaign for much greater access for older citizens to the prevailing institutions. It accepts that, with more sensitive or more colourful approaches, in-takes of elders might and should be extended in traditional fields. At the same time, it places greater prominence on its own essential role as the promoter of a new style of agency. It sees no incompatibility in this. Some defenders of the established system, itself under financial and other attack, have accused U3As of further undermining the stability of the existing framework by concentrating on a novel and largely non-statutory approach. The U3A pioneers reject this charge on the grounds that there is room and need for both approaches: indeed, before the educational slack in the potential elderly market is taken up, there will need to be many more developments, some adaptive reforms of what is, some entirely fresh devices.

For it is a significant part of the U3A pitch that the scale of the question of educational provision for older people requires the invention of new institutions, of which the University of the Third Age could be the first of several. With perhaps as many as fifteen million people in the 'third age', Britain, along with most other developed nations, faces that most frightening of challenges, namely, an unprecedented one. No societies have hitherto enjoyed what should be the luxury of maybe a quarter of their populations living lengthy periods of post-work existence. Many people shedding economic and social responsibilities in their fifties may now expect to remain active and healthy for twenty or thirty years, in some cases for as long again as they have negotiated those economic and social responsibilities of the 'second age'. With no previous experience to guide us, there is an urgent need to experiment and learn briskly. A logical assumption might be that opportunities for constructive mental as well as physical activity would be socially desirable, in part to postpone and shorten the onset of the dependent and

thus, from the community standpoint, excessively expensive 'fourth age'; in part as a fitting reward for the previous labours of the older generation. There is also the moral factor that, without opportunities of this kind, there is, yet again, an emphasis on the second class nature of senior citizenship. Equally, it must surely be accepted that, certainly over the next quarter century, public provision for many of the elderly population, of the type and level afforded for the present two per cent who participate, could scarcely be contemplated. It would both be too expensive and too inflexible; most older people would be unlikely to be attracted by the current institutional profferings, however deliciously packaged, and, were that to happen, the country could not afford it.

The U3A enterprise, therefore, asserts the virtue of independence as its novel contribution to the debate, and, as a corollary, adds the related virtue of frugality. In brief, there is no strong tradition for the self-regulatory principle in British education. It is not completely absent. Brave souls and bold agencies have, sometimes successfully, piloted co-operative schemes, but they have been unusual. Normalcy in the British education system has been and still is the professional dictation of the form and content of the programmes. Localised campaigns and consultations or sheer market pressures might, occasionally, lead to changes of mind, but these are rare. Because the learners, it is supposed, are too immature to decide, because of the dictates of examination pressures, because of one of a dozen other reasons, it is the custom to present programmes to the public. For those beyond the school-leaving age, it is a question of take-it-or-leave-it; for those before the school-leaving age, it is a matter of take-it.

In British education, the customer does not become a consumer until, compulsorily or voluntary, he or she has accepted the programme. It is precisely this acute absence of consumer sensitivity which has led some U3A protagonists to have nothing to do with schools and colleges and to advise seeking the aid of libraries which, they argue, are much more attuned to customer needs. The essential characteristic, then, of a U3A is that it is the creation of its members and that they make the decisions about what subjects should be taught and to what levels and in what style. Those U3As which are ostensibly under sponsorship of a traditional institution tend to adhere to that principle, and, in doing so, most clearly reflect the continental U3A practice of negotiating some form of tutorial contract with the mother agency.

On a day by day basis, the process is, obviously, a cyclic

one. A public meeting or a working party may draw up the initial schedules, and then as memberships grow in numbers and experience, the democratic regulo extends. It is difficult to overestimate the dramatic force of this change. British educational institutions are financed by the state and those controlled by local education authorities are, theoretically, at the behest of the people's representatives. But, in the humdrum sense of daily management, it is wellnigh impossible to claim for any public sector body that it is owned by its users. A progressive tutor here or there might devolve his responsibility on to his students, but, in the last analysis, they would never, like U3A members, own their institution.

In this respect, U3As are more akin to the best of pre-school play groups and mother and toddler groups, of which well over thirty thousand exist in Great Britain. Where nearest their own ideal, they are the creation of the parents whose requirements they meet. Like some U3As, they might employ the patronage, especially in the early days, of another organisation, such as a church or other local voluntary group; but, basically, they are their own creature to have and to hold. In their mild and inoffensive manner, U3As, therefore, are an illustration of the co-operative mode, closer in style, perhaps, to the Rochdale Pioneers than the University Senate.

U3As, in that regard, are part of an imposing lineage of social and economic ventures which have refused either to bow the knee to soulless public bureaucracy or open the purse for avid commercial agencies. Britain has had a colourful history of voluntary endeavour, in that connotation of being non-public and non-commercial. Its record of economic co-operatives has not been strong, but in community development, charitable work, and, probably most of all, in cultural and recreational activity (its thousands of amateur sporting and dramatic and musical societies and clubs, for instance) Britain has shown remarkable eagerness and durability. It is this tradition of collective self-help upon which U3As draw, and for which self-evidently, there is sufficient scope within the ranks of the retired. That is not to suggest that public resources, central and local, in money and in kind, would not be welcome and are not needed. There is also the tradition of public funds utilised to foster voluntary effort, and U3A protagonists have called upon the government for that kind of unstringed support.

It is a commonplace of government financing that voluntary work is superficially attractive because less costly than a wholesale public commitment. Often this means doing good on the cheap, but, in the case of the University of the Third Age,

that argument does not hold: proponents of U3As are in the blissful position of claiming that cheaper is actually more effective. The proposition is that the heavyweight or goldplated character of an education service based on costly buildings and a costly professional cadre is, in itself, offputting to many of the likely recipients and too large and impersonal to respond to small scale need. Thus one aspect of the frugal independence of U3As has been to arrange for comfortable, informal surrounds for their own sake.

An interesting sidelight on this has been the relative difficulty of setting up U3As in larger conurbations, where those keen to participate have perhaps been numerous but widespread. The more successful models have tended to be rural or small town ones with, in some cases, several sub-branches established over a wide country area. The lesson seemed to be that, for example, a large city would, like a shire county, require several rather than just one U3A. Even in two or three sizeable examples, which are operating perfectly happily, the actual locations used may be quite numerous. American surveys have underpinned what is now a common British impression. In New York three-quarters of the elderly were not prepared to travel more than five miles or for half an hour to classes and in California one in five stated an absolute preference for home-based courses. Implicit in much of this is the need to take the mountain to Mahomet, and, already, lots of U3A activities are taking place in the homes of members.

The need to recruit and formulate plans at district and street level is uppermost. Two fairly obvious illustrations must suffice. Some groups may follow on television a serialised classic novel or a series of scientific programmes, much more telling fare, incidentally, than the stilted sentences of all but the most impressive tutors. Such groups would thereafter read further and meet for discussion and argument, but, at that first juncture, the person's sitting room effectively replaces the lecture hall. Possibly more important is the case of the house-bound or hospitalised older person, or the U3A member who is perhaps temporarily ill or not extensively mobile. Several U3As have schemes to accommodate such people by regular visits of sympathetic co-students and other means. In those cases the sickroom or hospital is substituted for the classroom or laboratory.

Universities of the Third Age proclaim the existence around us in our environment of the wherewithal for successful educational action. The prestigious erections of the modern system, those citadels to the belief that lavish and overt

expenditure is the key to scholarship, are, to some extent, regarded as static and narrowing. U3As provide, in the main, for those who cannot or do not wish to travel far, who wish to join together, without the stress of academic rivalry, with, usually, small numbers of their fellows, in, often times, uninhibiting and unostentatious places. We assert the right of every trueborn Englishman or Englishwoman to start, if they so desire, a university in their own back parlour. An Englishman's home is, or could be, his college.

(D) An Anti-authoritarian Approach

That polemical motto leads, naturally enough, to the fourth item on this chapter's agenda: the rebellion against authority. The steadfast assertion of independence is, of course, a staging-post in that direction, but the critique, in some U3As, advances even further down the trail. Put simply, the role of the tutor has been challenged and indeed frequently abandoned. The conventional chasm between the dominant teacher and the passive learner has been bridged by the magical device of refusing to acknowledge the categories. U3As have members. Membership carries the obligation to give as well as take. Members should offer as well as accept teaching.

That stern puritanism does not, needless to say, extend to all U3A activities. If membership declares itself in favour of submission to tutorial rule, then that is their business. Another U3A might find that, unless the principle is broken, it is impossible to find a tutor and run a course. It is worth adding, however, that, even in extremis, few U3As actually employ teachers, relying on volunteers, usually of Third Age status themselves, and regarding them as members. It equally merits note that, by eschewing the payment of salaries, U3As dodge the most burdensome expenditure suffered by the public education system, just as, in chief, they avoid the second most onerous expense, that of accommodation.

It is sometimes, of course, necessary and right for U3As to employ professional staff. These are and would be more in the nature of convenors and stewards than of didacts. Particularly in the opening phases, such organising genius may be indispensable. U3As require facilitators, men and women who will use their skills to help others form groups and encourage members to participate in a learning network. This reluctance to set the schoolmaster or mistress high on the pedantic pedestal is rare. Even those adult education bodies, such as the Workers Educational Association, which might claim for themselves an element of democratic oversight, have scarcely ever ditched

the professional tutor.

The rationale is social, not economic, amiable although that secondary consideration might be. The notion is based foursquare on the assemblage of experience and skills which is the automatic gift of the Third Age. By dint of living, working, travelling, enjoying hobbies and holidays, fighting wars, raising children, a veritable treasury of knowledge is spontaneously available, and it is the task of the U3A to mobilise and channel that resource which, otherwise, would, like so many other attributes of Third Agery, be pitifully wasted.

One must first free one's mind of the restrictive practices of outworn epistemology and pedagogics. There is no limitation on the substance of U3A coursework. There is no measure on its purported value, beyond the essential willingness of the membership to listen, enjoy or otherwise absorb itself in such material. There is no inference that human communication is the exclusive talent of a small professionalised elite. Thus U3A memberships, ideally, share what content they may, with each the other.

Hackles are raised by this placid assumption that teaching is not, in some circumstances, quite the esoteric and mystical art its practitioners would have the public imagine. At one of the first public meetings in Glasgow where this principle was debated, some of that great city's dominies were mortally shocked at the contention, and labelled it 'harmful' and even 'dangerous'.

No one would claim that it is a counsel of perfectibility. The older autodidact can be boring and domineering, just as much as any professionally qualified teacher who happens to have those faults. In what are frequently small groups, it may be impossible to cover all tastes with this formula, but it has to be said that, thus far, the combined talents of these groups has occasionally offered a tastier variety of interests than some evening centres. The immediate barrier is the innate conviction of many older people, lay victims of the clerical conspiracy, that the leadership of a discussion or the exposition of an interest is totally beyond them. Two features are important, and here an adept tutorial skill may be of value. One is the insistence that the fundamental rule of sharing is adhered to, and that full participation of everyone is the prime objective: once that is determined, the teaching role loses some of its fears for those reared in the acceptance of the teacher as the sole and authoritarian contributor to the discourse. The other is a further endorsement for homely environs: a member is that

much more likely to feel confident enough to adopt these roles in a friendly and unstressful situation.

Above all else, there is the recognition that the end of U3A-ship is the same as its means. It is education, in its broadest definition and for its own sake. It is an attempt to exercise the mental, cultural and social muscles of its participants, simply in order that these do not atrophy and for their continued enjoyment, pride and self-respect. It is at once the purest and the most excellent of reasons. In a nutshell, the University of the Third Age provides the intellectual equivalent of jogging.

It might be instructive to muse over a year in the life of a tiny Hertfordshire group which has confined itself fairly sternly to these perhaps daunting regulations. Its membership has been, at most, forty or fifty and it has met weekly, normally with an attendance around twenty or twenty-five. It has appointed its own officers, although, in its origins, it was dependent on external local supports, and still enjoys the inexpensive use of a small hall. The social background of its members is wide, and only some four or five have had higher educational experience. Over the year no less than fifteen of this number led a discussion or, alternately, introduced some topic, ranging from computers and the cultivation of fuschia to the electricity industry and estate management. Visits and musical sessions were also organised, and those not ready to contribute tutorially have manfully fulfilled other tasks of a secretarial or other nature.

Several points are of significant note. Several members have, gradually and under the comforting influence of a sociable milieu, volunteered to 'teach' who, originally, had been disinclined to do so. That growing self-confidence has been perhaps the most notable and pleasing development. Another feature has been the ingenious solution to the criticism that academic self-help leads to a sporadic and inconsequential programme. The fact aside that, if the members so choose, that is of no import, this particular group has sometimes adopted a fortnightly pattern, alternating a once-off session with a series, the first of which was a six-part survey of European studies under the guidance of one member. Two other such series - aspects of London's history and specific national cultures - have been planned, and in a further development, various members have accepted the task of researching into and then leading on one or other item of each of these schedules.

In such ways has the idea of the 'mutual aid' university taken root in Britain. No U3A stalwart has any jealous, possessive sentiment about the formula. Not only will it continue to vary

considerably in practice, according to the needs and predilections and conditions of each new group, it will, undoubtedly, soon be joined by, maybe superceded by, other quite different agencies aimed at enhancing the educational opportunities of older people. There are, for instance, valid and respectable suspicions that this could never be a mass movement, encompassing the millions who might, over coming decades, look in vain for an appropriate educational opening.

One hopes, then, that the University of the Third Age in Britain will not only grow in quantity and quality, but be just the first of a score of initiatives. Nonetheless, one might add a final wish. The social benefits, no less than the economic advantages, of the self-help approach do suggest that, for any large scale breakthrough in this field, the techniques of academic mutuality may be the necessary keys. Slowly yet and even diffidently, U3As are visibly demonstrating that ordinary folk, with reasonable aid and encouragement, are altogether capable of inventing their own educational destiny, establishing, negotiating, deciding and, eventually, teaching. Some U3As are able proudly to boast that, unsatisfied with merely putting the lie to the legend that older people cannot learn, they have exhibited the capability of these citizens to tutor-organise.

To wallow in the not always felicitous jargon of administrative doctrine, U3As are de-centralising, de-institutionalising, and de-professionalising. Far from being a disjointed stopgap, they already, in their nobility of principle and through the commonsensical achievement of their pioneer endeavours, call to account the appallingly paternalist rigidities of the public education system at large.

In an attempt to draw attention to these pilot efforts, a two-fold plan has been used, studying first 'the general' and then 'the particular'. In Part One - 'the general' - a notable and distinguished cast has been recruited to look at the background to and the development of U3As in Britain. This involves the motivating forces for the movement in this country (Peter Laslett), set against the original and evolving philosophy of its European model (Michel Philibert) and the spread of the idea on a worldwide basis (David Radcliffe). To this is added a fresh and apposite revision of how it is thought older adults do and should learn (Paula Allman), together with an account of those two cross-currents of thought influencing the U3A phenomenon, community education (John Rennie) and the self-help ideal (Michael Young).

Part Two - 'the particular' - presents case-studies of

actual U3As at work. They are preceded by a description of the history and present incidence of U3A groups in Britain (Dianne Norton). Four representative units, showing the variety as well as the practical application of the idea, have been selected: Cambridge (Vernon Futerman); Devon (Frank Watson); Saffron Walden (John Jones and Joyce MacElroy), and the Lancaster District (Keith Percy). This combine of the importantly analytical and the necessarily practical will, it is hoped provide a balanced portrait of this newest of Britain's education developments.

Variety is indeed the spice of U3A life. As chapter seven so clearly shows, there are as many U3A structures as there are branches, each of them at one or another of half a dozen stages of development, and many of them rejoicing in their own local brand-name. There is the widespread grandeur of the Cambridge U3A concept; there is the many-faceted and many-headed approach of Devon; there is the smallscale group organisation of Saffron Walden; and there is the excellent Lancaster activity, with its valuable support from the university and from the Manpower Services Commission.

If any prototype is emerging, it seems to be around the focus of relatively medium-sized pockets of population. The successfully launched London U3A, while metropolitan in its catchment, is organised on a multi-centre basis, and the Devon Third Age Project also operates from a series of bases. There are several groups in the Yorkshire area, but they, while interconnected for some purposes, individually serve given locales. There is some evidence - Norwich, Manchester - that the larger conurbations are not too keenly susceptible to the blandishments of the U3A idea. Apart from the majestic and perhaps rather special progress of Cambridge, there has developed a tendency for the singly-based branches to settle down around, in terms of membership, the twenty-five to a hundred mark.

A membership of this kind seems to allow for either a weekly session for all or, perhaps coupled with this, a number of small cells, sometimes only fours, fives and sixes of members, for particular pursuits, often taking place in people's own homes. This sort of membership allows for some spread of activity and some flexibility of purpose, whilst never risking the end of that aimable informality and lack of imposing administrative apparatus which so pleases many of the members.

A glance at the geographical locations of the now over fifty - in varied states of evolution - U3As in Britain would tend to underscore this finding. There does seem to be, in the best sense of the term, a hometown ring about the character of U3As, with

branches starting in market-towns, in the smaller industrial townships, in rural centres and in what are sometimes called the 'villages' within the larger urban areas. Of course, as has been mentioned, the difficulties of travel and mobility play a part, but there does seem, if only, so far, impressionistically, a more positive aspect.

There does appear to be a sense of satisfaction in an identification with a district or locality which, in common or garden terms, retains a shape and a size of human proportions, and the persistent success of local history as an activity in many U3As seems to add to this feeling. That is by no means a scientific observation, but it does suggest that these 'mutual aid universities' may be meeting more needs than the desire to socialise and pursue educational activities.

Finally, it must be stressed that these are novel phenomena, and experience is, as yet, limited. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that British U3As have crowded a rich experience into a couple of very busy years.

Chapter 2

THE EDUCATION OF THE ELDERLY IN BRITAIN

PETER LASLETT

Peter Laslett is Director of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, and in celebrated books, like The World We Have Lost, he has won international fame for his insight into demographic issues, in particular with regard to elderly people. A Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge and an expert on John Locke, he was a founding father of the Open University and is now Chairman of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge.

In 1980, Peter Laslett issued a report, partly financed by the Elmhirst Trust, entitled The Education of the Elderly in Britain, which incorporated, by way of introduction, An Educational Charter for the Elderly (first published in New Society, 13 March 1980). In effect, the whole course of educational provision and the elderly in Britain stems from this seminal study. Peter Laslett has revised, amended and updated that report as a major contribution to this book. Drawing on European experience and on his own involvement with the beginnings of the Open University, Peter Laslett trenchantly defines the educational needs of older people and insists on their right to such provision. His proposed solutions to the educational challenge of providing decently for elderly people are wide-ranging, not least in his imaginative proposals for the use of distance teaching. The University of the Third Age, English-style, is but one aspect of this broad conspectus, but, needless to say, it is a significant one, and one which only makes complete sense when set against this overall frame of reference.

(A) An Educational charter for the elderly in Britain

The facts about the educational position of the elderly in our country are not in dispute. The British over 60 are the worst instructed people not only in our own population, but also among the advanced western countries as a whole. They are the least

educated community of native English speakers. This follows from the fact that the number of years of compulsory schooling in Britain in the 1920s was less than in the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Opportunities for subsequent instruction have been fewer also, at least if admission to universities and other institutions is considered rather than 'extra mural' activities. It is not clear that French or Italian children left school much earlier than British children in the 1920s and 1930s and countries like Portugal are clearly in a worse position than we are in the 1980s. But, if somewhat exaggerated, the statement draws attention to the restrictions on educational opportunity at times when Britain was able to afford more, sometimes much more, in the way of education to its population of all ages than other Western countries. In spite of this fact, the British over these years seemed satisfied that theirs was a superior educational system, especially in respect of the educational opportunities for adults.

Yet it could be argued that in so far as education is for life in general, for diversion, for leisure, or for 'civilisation' as it was once called, the older person needs educating now more than any other one of us needs it. The fact is, however, that the number of elderly students in classes open to them - and these are considerable, even though supply is tiny in proportion to need - is at the moment falling fast. This is the inevitable outcome when fees are being forced up by a 'realistic' financial policy, and when the educational rights of the elderly are never mentioned. For they have got to be explicitly set down.

The elderly in the British population are proportionately very numerous, and not likely to decrease. Nearly everyone who reads this can reckon that he or she will one day join their ranks. The demographers estimate that for the rest of this century getting on for a fifth of our whole population will be over 60, elderly that is to say, with those over 70 and over 80 forming an increasing proportion. After 2000 A. D. the total of the elderly might rise to a quarter, or even more. At all relevant times women will predominate over men amongst elderly persons, quite noticeably at 60, markedly at 70 and pronouncedly at 80 and over. But men have in our day nearly all ceased working by the age of 65. We have nine million British pensioners of no occupation.

This charter, therefore, is intended as a charter for all British persons, as they are now, or as they will finally be. It consists of five educational rights. The right to a fair share of the educational budget of the nation: the right to the abandonment of the identification of education with youth: the right of

access to all educational institutions on their own terms; the right to a 'distance teaching' organisation, to bring education for the elderly into the home: and the right to recognition of their unique intellectual and cultural value.

i. A fair share of the budget

The share of the education budget for the elderly should be fair in terms of need, and fair in terms of contributions made to the national wealth, both in the past and in the present. That need is clearly substantial, and has three distinguishable elements.

The first is for instruction itself - the relief of ignorance and all that goes with ignorance in the way of low self-esteem and lower social esteem, together with the incapacity to use existing services and opportunities.

The second is for specialized knowledge - for research undertaken in order to discover what older people most need to know, and how to make that knowledge available to them. This is especially necessary for the working class elderly, who in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s were wretchedly prepared for life.

The third element is more difficult to define. It consists in the necessity that members of the population at large should themselves know about ageing. The elderly are entitled to assume that all citizens should recognize that they belong to one of the oldest populations which has ever existed and one which has fewer resources than many or most other similarly placed western industrial countries.

A 'fair' share will have to be defined, after discussion. It presents an intricate problem in social and political ethics, particularly as it involves the past in relation to the present. How are we to assess the justice of our having almost doubled the national expenditure on education over the last thirty years, and yet allotted virtually none of the new resources to those who are now elderly? It was they, after all, who created the wealth which made it possible for us to expand the educational system at all. Public funds for universities were doubled between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies. These are just the institutions which do least, and perhaps can do very little, to educate the mass elderly. Their function in any programme of the kind we are concerned with would be for the most part confined to adding further to the knowledge of their own predominantly middle-class graduates in their later years, confirming and intensifying the disparity over the life course.

The elderly, then, cannot be said to be claiming a privileged position. In reckoning their fair educational share, account will have to be taken of the heavy demands which they can make on the more and more restricted welfare resources

of the country (for pensions, for health services, and so on). But the elderly have never previously been thought to have specifically educational needs at all, let alone rights.

The exercise of these educational rights might reduce the demands of the aged for care - care which is so very costly, especially when it is institutional. It is reasonable to suppose that the better informed, active and interested the elderly become, the less help of this kind they will need. The programme which this charter may imply is not expensive in relation to the financial and social costs of the elderly today. It might indeed save us resources of both kinds.

ii. Education isn't just for youth

The claim that education should not be identified only with youth is straightforward enough, and is being increasingly recognised, if in a rather grudging and contorted fashion. The lingering reluctance to part with the notion that education begins at a particular stage of early life (say five years old) and ends for most people a dozen years later - for some of us 15 or 20 years later - is revealed by the extraordinary vocabulary which is being developed about education over the life course. We have 'primary' and 'secondary' education, and 'lower' and 'higher' education. We have 'further' education and 'adult' education. We now have still heavier officialese expressions, like 'continuing' education - even 'post-compulsory' education, surely the prize exhibit in this collection of half-hearted verbiage. Half-hearted because of our rather puzzling unwillingness to recognize the fact that education is a lifelong interchange between those who do know, and can, and those who need to know, and be able. The process begins at birth and ends with death; or it should do. There is no social differentiation between each educational 'stage'; only predominantly technical differences.

The recent exercises in literacy and numeracy for the population at large have demonstrated that it is simply not true that all persons acquire what we think of as basic knowledge or skill when very young or young. They may need to be taught them at any time in their lives. They have as much right to such teaching at 35 or 45 years old as they have at five.

This is how it goes for the updating of professional knowledge, too. Who now believes that a doctor or an electrician, or even an undertaker or a builder's foreman, can be taught all that he has to know for the rest of his life by the time he reaches the age of 25? And who, therefore, believes that all we need to know to live as old people can be instilled into us 40 or 50 years before we reach that stage of life?

iii. Access to all institutions

Access by the elderly to all educational institutions on their own terms must accompany the right to the abandonment of the identification of education with youth. There are discussable limits to such a right: limits of commonsense as well as of resources. Little is to be gained by trying to teach women and men in their seventies in schools where the furniture has been specially made for infants. But when we come to consider the exclusion of the elderly, especially the retired elderly, from the places where adolescents are now instructed - polytechnics or colleges of education or universities - we begin to see the substance of this claim.

Why should the community maintain all these establishments all the year round, keep them empty for almost half the time (at least in the case of universities), and yet deny access to everyone except those who happen to be current students registered as belonging to the institutions concerned? How far are their occupants justified in claiming such exclusive use, on the grounds that teaching makes it necessary? What about the playing fields and other recreational facilities they enjoy in such plenty? Why shouldn't these be open to the elderly whose leisure needs are so much greater than the young, and who are known to have a particular interest in physical exercise to keep them active? Should the universities and colleges be permitted to fill up their premises with well-heeled conference attenders during vacation, and keep old people out?

There was, in fact, an effort to introduce into Britain an American scheme for giving older people more access to university campuses. After some exploratory meetings the attempt to organise the reception of elderly persons into courses run for them by Universities and other 'higher' educational bodies was given up. No charitable body could be found which was willing to finance the essential central office to arrange for teaching to be given and to do the booking, and the plan was not strongly favoured by University Extra Mural Boards and other bodies which might have furthered the plan. It could be said that the fast growing number of organizations identifying themselves as Universities of the Third Age, or something similar, now form some sort of substitute. But few classes of this kind are yet taught by the regular staff of Universities, Polytechnics and so on. The principle of successive visitation, where elderly learners go to University at their choice, and most or finally all relevant institutions in the country are caught up in this scheme, has been lost sight of for the time. It is to be hoped that the notion will be revived in Britain, where

members of the Elderhostel Movement from the United States are already being received on to British campuses.

These are issues which are likely to come urgent in any case, and for several reasons. Institutions of 'higher' education might welcome older students into their courses to keep up numbers and to justify their existence and their income. But a question remains whether our universities and colleges will teach students in later life what they need, rather than what people of undergraduate age are usually treated to. This is why the phrase, 'on their own terms', has to be included in a statement of this educational right of the elderly. They may need to protect themselves against the examination system, for example.

iv. National 'distance teaching'

The right to a national 'distance teaching' organization for the elderly is the only one in the list which would require institutional innovation. The elderly, if less occupied than the rest of us, are also less mobile, and have as much right to be instructed in their own homes as the scholars of the Open University. Indeed, should the Open University itself undertake the task? The answer, as I see it, must be a resounding no.

This is both because the Open University is large enough already, and because it is a university. A university is emphatically what is not wanted by the elderly - the British elderly as they are now, anyway. This statement may read oddly in 1984 coming from one who has been active in starting British Universities of the Third Age. But it should become plain as the chapter continues that it is not inconsistent with the view there set out. This view is that the Universities of the Third Age are an attainable aim for those with the educational background which is required, and for some others too. For the mass elderly such organizations are entirely insufficient, and, for the reasons outlined above, even a liability. To expect of a movement which can find, and is finding, Universities of the Third Age a remedy for the larger problem of the educational simulation of the mass of the British elderly is unrealistic. The idea of a university is much overloaded. The model it stands for is badly suited to our national social needs. By the third right, older people would have access to the universities in any case; and some of them have certainly exercised it already, with the Open University and in other ways.

The issues multiply themselves under this heading, as with everything to do with the education of the elderly. Here are some of the questions which have to be faced:

Is it not wrong to make the elderly a special group - a ghetto is the word often used? This expression and implied criticism of any movement for the specific education of the elderly has been common since 1980. Those who voice it should perhaps be reminded that education has been a youth ghetto for nearly all of its history, and is only now beginning to show some responsibilities towards those not young, as bureaucracy defines youth. No one seems to object to young people having agebased institutes, educational or otherwise. Why should they be treated differently from other persons enforcedly at leisure in our society, the unemployed, for example? Then there is the question of the drawbacks of teaching at home, for the elderly stand in need of outside company. Those most in need of instruction are also those most in need of joining others of different ages to take part in co-operative activities.

There are also open questions about how much we yet possess in the way of information as to how distance teaching might work. Does anyone know what the curriculum of an 'open learning' institution would be, when it is not a university, not a college of higher education, not a polytechnic? Will people not motivated as highly as most Open University students benefit from teaching brought to them in the home? How would a potential student body be affected by its consisting predominantly of elderly women?

New knowledge is needed to respond to such questions as these, but it is likely that a mixture of 'distance learning' and in-house instruction is the most likely to be adopted.

Teaching-at-a-distance - by correspondence and/or the mass media - has great attraction as a means of instruction for the elderly. A proportion of them is being cared for in hospitals or residential homes; even more are almost immobile. It is difficult to see how many of these people could otherwise be reached at all, at a price we could afford.

v. Cultural recognition

The fifth and last educational right of the old is the recognition of their cultural and intellectual importance. The Cambridge-shire College of Arts and Technology, under pressure of the cuts being imposed everywhere, recently announced its decision to cease offering the classics after the retirement of the present teacher. At least a quarter of the students in the classes were elderly people, and this proportion was growing.

Not many want the classics even in Cambridge, of course. But with the business of learning enough to earn a living as pressing as it now is, and with the numbers in what might be

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

called subjects of cultivation getting less - who else is at liberty to pursue them but the leisured aged?

The last thing I wish to be understood as saying is that many old people should want to learn Latin or Greek, or feel inadequate if they have no desire for such a thing. Art, archaeology, social history and family history (which includes the history of ageing) are rather different. They come more easily.

We are still largely ignorant of what the elderly should be taught, or teach themselves, in order to give them that mental stimulation which they so much need and which may go some way towards keeping them from becoming expensive liabilities to the health and social services. But I believe that their ripeness, experience and wisdom fit them for a function of which we stand pre-eminently in need - the preservation and intensification of our cultural heritage. They have a right to exercise that function, and that right corresponds to our common need.

(B) Education and Elderly People

This educational charter for the elderly in Britain was composed in the knowledge that their needs and rights were better recognized and provided for elsewhere. But it was drawn up before any attempt had been made at a personal acquaintanceship with the provision made in those other countries where the elderly formed a considerable part of the population. It has to be recognized that most of these countries are in the rich, developed part of the world; at the present time it is there that the ageing of the population has proceeded to its greatest extent, especially in Western Europe.

Extensive experience in the university system of the U.S.A., which is much more widespread in its scope and purposes than that of Britain, and also a provider of social services on a large scale, in spite of its flavour of private enterprise, had made it clear that those in the higher age ranges in America were far better off than in Britain. This was primarily due to the fact that the American elderly had received so much more instruction in their youth, which is also true of the elderly in the other relevant countries, but it was also owing to the fact that the American universities had offered their graduates refresher courses and a degree of access to their facilities not usual in Britain.

To this extent, as is implied in the charter, the education of the elderly is particularly a British problem. Nevertheless, all our neighbours in Western Europe and some in Central and Eastern Europe are, or shortly will be, in a similar

demographic position and, as was to be expected, it is the Scandinavians who have most to offer to those interested in the elderly. Not only do these countries have a long tradition of social service of this kind, but they are now also amongst those best able to afford the expense of such programmes. After learning during 1979 about the Elderhostel movement of the U.S.A. an experience which brought home the urgency of getting something of the same kind going in Britain, it was decided to visit Scandinavia, as well as Germany, later in that year. It was particularly important to go to France, in order to pay a visit to one of the wellknown Universités du Troisième Age. A journey to Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany was accordingly undertaken in September, with some assistance from the Elmhurst Trust, and a visit paid to France in October.

It would be wrong to give the impression that we have been unaware of the issue of educating the elderly in Britain, or that nothing has been done about it. Those responsible for adult education (the W. E. A., the Extra Mural boards and so on) have recognized the progressive ageing of their constituents and have modified policies to some extent in response. Those responsible in industry and business for the retirement of working people have founded the Pre-Retirement Association, which instructs increasing numbers of those in their late 50s and early 60s, mostly in the larger establishments. There has also been some theoretical discussion and writing about the subject.

In British universities and research centres work is going forward in the study of ageing and the aged themselves mainly amongst biologists and psychologists. But it has to be said that there has been very little research so far amongst social scientist, and almost no participation whatever on the part of political scientists, historians, philosophers or those in the humanities. The British effort has so far been small in relation to that made in other comparable countries and tiny when the extent of the elderly population is considered, and when it is compared with research activity in other fields. No national institute exists for the purpose to parallel that in the U.S.

There is a professional association for the social study of ageing, the British Society of Gerontology, but it is still relatively small, if expanding fast, and certainly small by comparison with the organisations catering for medical and physiological practitioners and investigators. The fact that what is sometimes called the medical model of ageing is widely seen to be inadequate when it comes to issues of a social, cultural and educational kind, makes this the more unfortunate. A British

initiative is long overdue, and it is good to be able to say that there are signs that it is now under way, such as the successful launch in 1981 of the journal Ageing and Society, edited by Malcolm Johnson.

Nomenclature is of some importance to this topic, because all words and expressions to do with the higher age groups have discouraging, even demeaning associations. What is more, ageing is not exclusively to do with the age ranges in question, but applies to all individuals, who are ageing from birth and show signs of physiological senescence from the middle 20s. The fact that to call anyone old, or even retired, or elderly, is widely felt to be uncomplimentary or worse, has led to a series of euphemisms, of which the most used in Britain is the American expression 'Senior Citizen'. Like all such attempts at an evasive vocabulary of a quasi-complimentary kind, the phrase itself has lost much or all of its virtue. A better expression is needed which avoids euphemism, and we have adopted the French notion of the Third Age. This nomenclature provides the basis for the general approach which is characteristic of les Universités du Troisième Age - the third age universities. The object of educational policy, at all levels of education and information, and for every year of a person's life, is to prevent an individual ever passing from the Third to the Fourth age, a transition which for the majority need never occur at all before final illness.

There are signs that the expression Third Age had itself come to be looked upon in France as a little tarnished which is somewhat discouraging. It is obviously not possible nor is it desirable to rid the higher ages of all their associations with physical decline and death. But the Third Age, being simply numerical, is more objective than its rivals and an attractive usage in itself. It will be noticed that it contains a similar idea to that embodied in the phrases used by American gerontologists to make the distinction between the old old and the young old. This is a clumsier phraseology and one which does not bear the inference that the final and unwanted stage is by no means inevitable for all.

As for the general approach to the subject of the educational stimulus of the elderly, four principles may be set down. They seem to follow from the educational charter which has been set out, and from what it is possible to learn about what may happen if the rights in the charter are acted upon.

First principle: that a number of assumptions about the functions of education and the duties of educators get in the way of policy making. Since the elderly need no qualifications,

have no careers to pursue, and are not in a position to earn more by taking instruction, all talk of entrance barriers or tests of progress or examinations of any kind is largely irrelevant to their education. In this way the educational stimulus of the aged requires an outlook different in principle from that appropriate to education as it has usually been pursued.

Even when education for retirement is at issue, instruction of the traditional kind is not required, since subsequent performance hardly matters, or rather matters in a way very different from what it does in schools and colleges. The elderly person unaware of the process of ageing, unable to cope with the social services or with the reduced circumstances imposed by society on the old, is certainly at a personal disadvantage, and this disadvantage is to some extent remediable. Everyone benefits if this handicap is overcome, society at large as well as the elderly themselves.

But this is very different from preparing a young person for life, or retraining a middle-aged person in mid-career. As for education or instruction for leisure, for the absence of an occupation of a subsistence-earning kind, this has two distinct connotations, which are difficult to reconcile with each other. In the first place it is surely a general object of all education to enrich experience. This is in no way specific to preparing the elderly for leisure, or should not be. But in the second place education is leisure, or can be said to be an important aspect of leisure. For in its literal meaning education is the drawing forth of a person's capacities for experience and fulfilment.

The pre-retirement course is, therefore, inadequate or even inappropriate as education for leisure. Such an undertaking, if it is possible at all, would have to go on throughout the rest of the life of the person retiring. Once this is recognized, it is easy to see the force of the argument of those radicals who maintain that pre-retirement education is only an expedient of a society unable to find work for all of its active citizens to reconcile them to being idle.

Second principle: that the traditional framework of 'levels' in British education is unsuited to the educational stimulus of the elderly. It makes little sense to think of the elderly being educated at university level, or at sixth form level, or of their being unable to keep up a higher educational standard. It makes no sense at all to think of such a pupil climbing from one level to another. It may be important to young people engaged in mastering a difficult technique that they be protected from the entry into their classes of elderly persons in no position to do

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

as well as they do. But this is an argument in favour of the separate educational treatment of the old, and does not imply that standards should be applied to them.

Third principle: that the social status hierarchy of British educational institutions is an obstacle to the adoption of a proper policy. The associations which go with university teaching in our country are particularly unfortunate because we have had an elitist university tradition to a greater degree than any of the other countries with which I am familiar. Because this is so, the very title 'extra mural' has unwelcome implications: even the WEA and the polytechnics have not so far succeeded in resisting the capillary action of elitism on all English educational institutions. Every effort has to be made to prevent the education of the elderly from going up market in this way, which argues for the importance of an entirely fresh start.

There is a difficulty here, however. It would be a pity, it would be a palpable loss to the education of the elderly, if the motive of intellectual and even social emulation disappeared altogether. That this motive can be effective is illustrated by the success of the Open University. Policy makers have to tread carefully in this area.

An implication of the three principles so far laid down is that there is a sharp divide between a policy appropriate to those, a tiny minority in Britain, who have developed 'higher educational' or 'university' aspirations, and all the rest. For the most part, though not entirely, the division arises because of previous educational experience and it is this which makes for a pronouncedly unequal division in Britain between what one might call the interested, motivated middle-class elderly and the uninterested mass of the elderly. Policy for these two very unequal parts has to be very different. It is of the greatest importance that what works for the middle-class minority shall not be assumed to be appropriate for the great majority, and above all that a watered down version of what is offered to the one shall not be thought to serve for the other. It must never be forgotten that the universities are upper-class elitist institutions in the eyes of the British working-class woman or man, and that all competitively based education rejects the unsuccessful, who resent it more or less, and for longer and shorter periods of their lives.

A realistic assumption of the educator of the elderly is that every one of his subjects has been made to feel this rejection, or has had so little contact with education since his childhood that education means almost nothing to him or to her.

Fourth principle: that the educational stimulus of the elderly is, from the pupil's point of view, urgent in a way which is quite different from the urgency of education of other kinds. It is a novel and rather frightening fact about a contemporary population like our own that nearly all the deaths occur to those over 60. Though it may seem, with $21\frac{1}{2}$ years to live for women at that age, and 18 for men, that there is a surprising amount of time during which people are going to live when elderly or old, it must not be overlooked that numbers are diminishing rapidly at all relevant ages and very rapidly at the later ones. In this crucial respect the elderly are entirely different both from the school population and those in adult education. This is literally their last chance and anything done to help them has to be done very fast. It is now intended to study the educational needs of the elderly, from the viewpoint of the two major groups, the 'interested' minority and the 'uninterested' majority.

(C) Educational stimulus of the interested middle-class elderly

There are very many ways in which the interested middle-class elderly are being educated at the present time in other countries, but it is convenient to class them as of three types: education within the established universities; founding university-type institutions for the elderly, run by the elderly; providing for the elderly in adult education programmes, along with others. In my view the second of these is most effective.

We have tentatively begun to found in Britain Universities of the Third Age, and we shall continue to do so. We should here follow the French initiative, though we should not confine the interested middle-class elderly to these institutions. We should, furthermore, make an attempt to use those who come together to learn in our Universities of the Third Age as instructors for the mass of the aged, who constitute the real problem.

Admitting the elderly to regular university courses

In all the countries visited, the elderly are admitted to the regular universities and higher educational institutions, in larger or smaller numbers. In Britain least is done, and universities tend only to admit elderly people who satisfy the 'entrance standards' imposed on their juniors. There are, nevertheless, some students over 60 even at Cambridge colleges. In Scandinavia the elderly have a right to attend universities without satisfying the requirements imposed on school-leavers, and they do so, though on a restricted scale. Recent educational reform movements in these countries, especially in Denmark

and Sweden, have insisted on these rights, in Sweden as part of the compensatory policy which attempts to make up to the old for what they have missed because higher education was on a much smaller scale when they were of an age to receive it.

In the charter for the elderly this right is insisted on for British citizens, and reference is made to the issue of justice between the age groups which lies behind the claim. It is important that this right be formally secured for our elderly, and, in 1983 the Forum for the Right of the Elderly People to Education adopted the principle that no educational institution in Britain which did not admit elderly persons as of right to instruction should be given money from the state. But, in my judgement, the admission of the elderly without entrance examination to the ordinary courses which exist at institutions of 'higher education' will not accomplish much. It should happen. It would do good symbolically. It will benefit some individuals. But nothing else seems likely to come of it.

The changed age structure of the population of Western European countries makes it important that all possible education patterns for the elderly should be explored, even for the small minority of the interested middle-class elderly. The outcome of experimental ventures, in Scandinavia and elsewhere, may well be instructive, but, as things are at present, it seems that the University of the Third Age, an autonomous second university run for and largely by the elderly themselves within an existing 'regional academy' is the most promising expedient in the long term.

L'université du troisième âge - The University of the Third Age

What we need to do is to foster a sense of general educational responsibility in British Universities, to the population as a whole, to the elderly population in particular, as well as to their localities. The organization of education in France fosters such a sense of responsibility by grouping of the higher educational institutions of a region into an academy, as for example L'académie de Basse Normandie. L'université du 3^{me} âge de Basse Normandie is located in the city of Caen on the campus of the University of Caen, which is the major institution of l'Académie, and, although it shares the buildings of that regular University, the Third Age University is an institution of its own, run to a large extent by its own elderly students. Although no British U3A has adopted the Caen model - in Britain actual ownership of the agency resides in the elderly membership, unlike in France where the elderly do not really own their institution - its advantages are worth noting.

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

- i. Low cost. The pupils Caen pay only Frs. 75. (about £9) per course per year, and this is the regular university year from October to May. In September 1978, the third year of the institution's existence, when the number of pupils was 514, the budget was Frs. 147,233 (about £15,000). It should be noted, incidentally, that the 514 students had risen from 440 (139 males, 301 females) in 1976/7, and rose to 567 in 1978/9. The £15,000 does not include the salaries of the university teachers who are employed by the regular University of Caen. But it is noteworthy that £4,500 was raised by fees paid by students, the rest coming from the municipal contributions and from banks, etc. Though there was a deficit in the year reported on, it seems clear that new resources are being tapped and existing facilities more intensively used.
- ii. The elderly get what they want. This seems to be mainly languages (34% of the syllabus) but includes quite a range of other things; physical education 10%, literature 9%, geology 7%, history 7%, arts 6%, 'design' 6%, etc. Many of the meetings or teaching occasions are lectures, passively attended, or visites, mostly what we should think of as guided tours led by a teacher.
- iii. Participation in research. In the case of Caen the major research project was organised by the biologists in the university interested in the fauna of the Normandy beaches, crustacea, which the elderly students were systematically reporting upon. This type of collaborative research, where a number of interested but unskilled people in the localities supply uniform information to a band of full-time researchers, has great promise for the educational stimulus of the elderly. We have used it extensively, though not specifically with elderly people, at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, where the largest national archive which yet exists for historical demography has been built up by this means. The sense of taking part in a worthwhile academic exercise and systematically contributing to knowledge is a great addition to the studies of the volunteers. It is a method already adopted by one or two British U3As.
- iv. The organisation proliferates easily. At Caen branch units, antennes, have grown up rapidly in the lower Norman town, once more being set up on the initiative of the elderly people, and this expedient for extending the activity to rural areas could be of importance in Britain.
- v. The possibility of a teaching force to help with the educational stimulation of the mass. If it should turn out to be the case that the great difficulty of implementing a programme of

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

mass education for the elderly in Britain would be lack of organisers and teachers, then the volunteer students in the Universities of the Third Age might perhaps supply the need. It has to be said that no such attempt has been made in France, where it could be stated that the Universities of the Third Age are run by middle-class people, for middle-class people and middle-class purposes.

There are obvious limitations to the Universities of the Third Age in their present form. They exist in France because of an excess of teaching capacity in the established universities, an excess which already exists indeed in England and will rise as the 'regular' student body contracts. But if the movement should grow to any size, extra teaching strength would have to be found and this would at once raise the cost considerably. The Caen organisation requires mobility on the part of the students, who have to attend away from their homes and to provide their own transport, and it seems that every member of L'université du Troisième Age de Basse Normandie has access to a car. In Britain plans are already afoot in some U3As to transcend this limitation by taking provision to the housebound and immobilised.

In spite of these and other limitations the French are very proud of this achievement and only too anxious to export it.

Adult Education Classes and the Interested Elderly

Under this heading is intended all descriptions of education, other than that meted out in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities, to their full-time students. The enrolment of the elderly in such classes is extensive in all the countries I have visited, though I know of no source from which these numbers can be estimated, certainly in our own country. It is generally agreed, however, as we shall see, that though large numbers of elderly people take classes, they are only a negligible proportion of all elderly people nevertheless.

This form of educational stimulus of the interested, mainly middle-class elderly, will obviously continue whatever innovations take place in the field, and no move should be made to discourage such attendance. On the contrary it is to be hoped that a new initiative would tend to raise their numbers. The great advantage of such teaching is that the elderly are taken outside their homes and brought into classes alongside of other members of the community. In the case of some of the organisations concerned, especially in the WEA, a conscious effort is made to prevent the student body from becoming exclusively composed of interested middle-class pupils.

Nevertheless, the view that all that might now be needed is the expansion of conventional provision of this kind to take in more and more of the population, and particularly more and more of the elderly, is not acceptable as an adequate response to our dilemma. It is perhaps worth while listing one by one the reasons for this negative attitude.

In the first place, there are differences in the requirements of elderly people in matters of curriculum, some of them presumably arising from the singularity in their sex ratio as well as in their age. The preferences exercised by the elderly at Caen, with a strong insistence on linguistic subjects, may not be typical for France and not applicable for England. But they demonstrate that the elderly themselves do have their specific tastes which are not necessarily identical with those of younger people, and should not be foisted upon those younger people either. Perhaps a more important point is the demand amongst the elderly for physical exercise and for travel. The teaching visit to a historical building or an archaeological site seems to be of great interest to them, precisely the stimulus which is being sought.

In the second place, the times at which elderly people can attend differ, because they are far more often at liberty in what are called working hours. They can take consecutive days off for course purposes and some of them are clearly prepared to do so.

In the third place, the teaching attitude, assumptions and so on are also different, as has already been suggested in earlier sections.

In the fourth place, quite apart from the issue of curriculum, it is questionable whether the interests of younger people would be properly served if the interested elderly were to be represented in these classes in numbers proportionate to their strength in the constituency, the constituency being those able and willing to attend. The really successful recruitment of the elderly might swamp their juniors and leave little scope for the 'progressive' teaching which younger people clearly frequently need and insist upon.

In the fifth place, there is great advantage in a new start, especially one marked by institutional innovation and novelty in methods of teaching. Universities of the Third Age and distance teaching would be of this character.

In the sixth place, the classes of the kind now established could not be used to train a teaching body to tackle the problem of the educational stimulation of the mass of the elderly. If this difficult task is to be done, institutions for teaching a

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

particular description of middle-class elderly pupils will have to be set up in any case.

These six considerations convince me that present educational provisions in Britain must be pronounced insufficient for our purposes. To this it might perhaps be replied that the Open University could be adapted and extended so as to involve the new functions which have been described. The Open University does, of course, teach a number of the elderly, at the higher level, as has been said, and clearly could, if it wished, institute courses directed particularly to them. If what has been said about the assumptions of traditional education are true, however, this would imply that the Open University would have to include two very different teaching traditions and practices. The OU, is, moreover, large enough already, as is insisted in our educational charter, and it suffers, as no doubt all distance teaching institutions are bound to suffer, from a heavy burden of administration. There is a further point, that the teaching of the OU requires good sight and advanced reading skills on the part of its pupils.

If existing institutions, including the OU, could not in principle be extended so as to satisfy the needs we are discussing, it does not follow that younger persons should be excluded from teaching programmes established with the elderly in mind. Most French Universities of the Third Age take pupils of age 55 and above only, but this does not seem to me to be a necessary limitation. What does seem to be important is that the leadership and administration of such institutions, should be in the hands of those judged to be in the third age.

Nevertheless, one important point must be decided. Should it become necessary in Britain to make particular provision for the instruction of the technologically unemployed, it must surely be done quite separately from any provision for the education of the elderly. Retraining may stimulate intellectually, but its proper object is decidedly not intellectual stimulation. It is an interesting fact that the elderly, at least at Caen and in Copenhagen, sometimes elect for professional subjects, like accountancy, but it does not follow that they should become part of a course intended for those engaged on accountancy as a career.

At Umea in Sweden there exists a project for engaging both the unemployed and the elderly in data collection for the benefit of historical demographers, and I think it is fair to say that the elderly have been much more satisfactory in that role than their somewhat unwilling companions. It might, of course, turn out that a high industrial society like our own will finally have to make the dismal admission that it has got to accept a large body

of unemployed to whom technological re-training is irrelevant, because there never will be jobs enough for them. This would create a situation in which education for leisure or idleness would become a prime demand on the educational system. Even then I would myself retain the view that the elderly would have to be separately handled, in view of the special needs that have already been described.

Limits of traditional adult education

It could be said in general of the history of adult education that it has been a succession of false dawns from the point of view of the educational stimulus of the mass, at least in our country. Neither Extra-mural Boards, nor the WEA, nor the Open University have ever got very far beyond the educational stimulus, of those members of the middle-class, who, for various reasons, have failed to take advantage of higher education at the conventional age, or who, having done so, have felt the need of further instalments later in life. This is true of the Universities of the Third Age in France, nearly two-thirds of whose students come from teaching, commerce and the professions, and it is true of Elderhostel in America, nearly all of whose students are graduates.

However important it is, therefore, to insist that the source of the teaching power for a mass educational programme may well be in the students of our projected third age universities, we must avoid the mistake of supposing that we could so design these institutions that they would themselves reach the mass of the working-class elderly. It has been the failure to appreciate the force of such arguments which has made necessary the introduction of an elementary literacy programme for adults in this country. It is of great significance that these programmes, along with the numeracy programme, pioneered by the National Extension College by the use of television, have had to have recourse to the broadcasting media.

The middle-classes and the mass

As we leave the minor problem for the major problem, the interested and motivated middle-class for the less interested and less motivated mass of the population, three points should perhaps be stressed once more.

The first is the consistent evidence for the stimulus effect which contact or renewed contact gives to elderly persons, and occasionally to their teachers as well. It is this stimulus which the French have in mind when they point to the University of the Third Age as a means by which those in the third age are

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

prevented as far as and for as long as possible from entering the fourth age, the age of dependency. Stimulus by education is enormously cheaper than maintenance, maintenance inside or outside institutions.

The second point has to do with the understandable disposition to believe that what works for the motivated, middle-class elderly, with a youth spent in education and a life spent with the possibility of re-educating themselves, will work for the much larger numbers of lower class individuals for whom none of these things holds true. The third point is a more general one and plunges us straight into the next section. Further use of air space for educational purposes must seem unjustifiable if that educational venture is likely to attract predominantly middle-class motivated students, of the kind who have in general responded to the offerings of the Open University. This last statement implies two things. Firstly, that all further use of distance teaching by means of broadcasting will have to be so designed that the mass of the population benefit from it. It implies, secondly, that since we know as yet so little about the problem of stimulating the largely unmotivated, a research programme providing us with the required knowledge is a matter of the greatest urgency.

(D) Educational stimulus of the uninterested mass of the elderly population

In Denmark the famous folk high school movement was founded as long ago as the 1860s to tackle the problem of illiteracy in the working class. From the very beginning it distanced itself from the established educational system by disregarding such traditional educational imperatives as examinations, qualifications, and the maintenance of universal standards. The movement had a political origin and its political importance remains, especially amongst the Danish parties of the left.

Folk high schools exist in Norway too, and all the Scandinavian countries have active pensioners organisations. The Pensionister Samvirke of Denmark runs three folk high schools devoted to the education of the elderly and the other parties also run such institutions, as do charitable bodies. Organised as they are, the Danish pensioners have considerable political clout, and they influence government attitudes towards education for all elderly people. It is recognized that stimulation of this kind will help to prevent dependency and institutionalisation. No country has a more active adult educational movement than Denmark, or one better financed and organised: no country devotes more attention to the problems presented by its proportionately

considerable population of elderly people. Yet I was told in Copenhagen that not one-tenth of the Danish elderly has so far been reached by educational programmes.

Neither the Norwegians nor the Swedes claim to be more successful than the Danes in this direction, though the Norwegians made some criticism of the Danes for inefficiency and extravagance. It seems justifiable to infer from this Scandinavian evidence that nothing approaching the education of a majority of elderly people yet exists anywhere, and certainly not in Britain.

Perhaps it is inappropriate to think of most persons being involved in education during the third age. Analogies with the position of younger individuals may be misleading. What is certain is that no way has yet been found to penetrate the mass of less educated elderly in any country so as to find out what their educational needs are. The only instrument which exists which might make that penetration possible is broadcasting. It is necessary that we consider its potentialities in some detail.

Use of distance teaching in the educational stimulus of the mass of the elderly population

Broadcasting is already in use for educational purposes on quite a large scale in the countries mentioned here. However, such uses are desultory and unsystematic, except where, as in Britain, university education along Open University lines has been instituted. There seems, therefore, to be no experience yet available for the use of broadcast media for student bodies, other than those anxious to get degrees, and certainly nothing about an elderly student body as a subject for educational stimulus in this way. There are two forms of broadcasting which can be usefully distinguished: open-ended cultural broadcasting and directed, specifically educational broadcasting.

It is quite evident that cultural programmes have provided the largest educational stimulus which has reached the mass viewing and listening audience. This audience in a country like our own is potentially the whole population, with the elderly watching and listening even more than the rest. By open ended is meant literally broadcasting à tous vents - to the four winds - with no attempt whatever to find out who listens, what the effect is, 'educational' or otherwise, or to follow up in any way. In total, the whole number of such broadcasts, all produced for their intrinsic interest to most people, must in Britain have enormous impact.

It is also evident that there is in our population a community of uncertain size on which this impact is scarcely perceptible,

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

since for them broadcasting is exclusively for diversion. They never intentionally look at or listen to cultural broadcasting. Some enlightening or instructional effect exists nevertheless, even here, if only because of the intellectual content of news programmes. There is also what used to be called in the BBC education by stealth, where enlightening items are placed just after highly popular broadcasts, in the confident knowledge that a proportion of the audience will fail to switch off when their favourites have departed. The programme policy of the broadcasting organisations themselves determines how much cultural broadcasting there shall be and how much education by stealth. It is very difficult to say what the net effect can be on the elderly, educationally passive or hostile, typically working-class British licence holder.

It is clear, therefore, that open ended cultural broadcasting represents far and away the largest cultural penetration, if that phrase can be permitted, which takes place in contemporary society. It is also clear that this deep penetration represents the only possible way for the determined educator of the mass of the elderly to get at his constituency. The obvious way to proceed is to solicit interested viewers of individual open ended broadcasts, those with some cultural content, to get into touch with the educational agency, and once this has happened to proceed with the educational process.

This strategy is now a familiar one, of course, having already been used by the National Extension College in the numeracy project, and so on. Any policy proposed for the use in these directions of the Fourth Channel or any other channel, must necessarily contain a strategy of this kind. It is in this way that genuine and potentially fruitful experimentation can be carried out. But it has to be recognized that in the eyes of most persons concerned with the educational stimulation of the mass of the elderly at the present time, broadcasting of whatever kind, open-ended or otherwise, and particularly television, is regarded in a very equivocal fashion.

The Dangers of television

Many discussing the possible use of these methods insist on the fact that the tendency of the old to be passive, to diminish their contacts with those outside the home, to lose sources of stimulus which were always present when they had to go daily out to work, and to care for their children - a process described by gerontologists as that of disengagement - was intensified by watching television. Indeed in the opinion of some, television was the typical instrument used by those who relapsed into isolation and

withdrawal. A Norwegian expert, Mrs Beverfeldt in Oslo, for example, judged television to be the enemy of the elderly.

In her view it keeps them within the household and impoverishes their social relations, interrupting their conversation with those who visit them, who have to compete with the moving screen. In her view it even interferes with their relationships with their children and others of great importance to them. As a substitute for these human relationships, however, television viewing addicts the elderly to a nullity, since the image cannot itself offer human companionship, or anything at all in the way of emotional sustenance. Television dependence, she felt, was unlikely to be of use in furthering the educational stimulus of the aged for all these reasons, the most important being that it was the usual explanation given why elderly individuals failed to take part in those social occasions, which it is one of the great merits of an educational programme to make necessary. I was told in Oslo that older people will not attend Norwegian folk high schools at such times as high audience television programmes are being broadcast, and this must be a very widespread experience.

Here we reach the crux of the use of broadcasting for the educational stimulus of the mass of the elderly, and it is beyond my information and experience to take the discussion further. The position seems to me to be as follows. Broadcasting, including sound broadcasting, is by far the most important experiential fact in their lives from the point of view of education, and yet it has these undesirable effects from the educational point of view. Television dependency is something which may perhaps diminish over time, and ways may perhaps be found to lessen its extent and its intensity. There is no reason to believe that much can be accomplished in these directions. We must simply become accustomed to the use of an instrument which has this two-edged quality. What is wanted is hard information and a policy.

Directed broadcasting and the educational stimulus of the elderly

Broadcasting specifically directed towards the elderly need not be confined to educational purposes. Programmes consisting almost entirely of diversion particularly acceptable to the elderly have been regularly transmitted in Scandinavia: items of useful information for this audience are mixed in with the amusement. It has to be said that some of the officials concerned with the welfare of the old who have described these programmes to me, found them intolerable to watch or to listen to. So trivial and

superficial were most of their contents that they were unacceptable to the highly educated, serious minded, relatively youthful, middle-class person.

I take this to be a fact of some significance for the following reasons. It could well turn out that there would be considerable criticism and even some active opposition from well-intentioned interested parties to the broadcasting of educational material discovered through research to be well suited to the educational stimulus of the mass working-class elderly. Those who arranged the numeracy and literacy programmes may already have experienced something of this kind. The fact seems to be that the material which may have to be presented will lack all of the 'elevating' associations which attach to the open-ended cultural broadcasting items we have been discussing. It will be bound to seem trivial to those who find it difficult to imagine not being possessed of the type of information which has to be concentrated upon and for whom the pace and manner of delivery is tedious. What is true for broadcasting, of course, would be true for the whole content of a mass educational undertaking.

Some research suggests that the elderly, even the highly educated elderly, slow down as learners, that they are not as quick to make inferences and are more easily confused, that their rate of processing is slower and that they have more trouble with the spoken word as against the written word. Repetition and pauses are necessary. Given these, however, their comprehensional ability to absorb is not in question. A point of interest is that they have formidable difficulties with negative information, which is daunting at all ages. It is also true that much more has to be learnt about such subjects.

Now that the possible difficulties and the obvious drawbacks of the use of television and radio for the distance teaching of the elderly have been explored, it might be useful to list its advantages.

i. Broadcasting is the only means of access to virtually every single person, whether at home or in an institution. This is the major reason why almost everyone at all engaged with the educational stimulus of the elderly readily agrees that access to broadcasting would be an enormous advantage, in spite of the dangers of television.

ii. Broadcasting is decidedly the most flexible of all methods of educational communication. Because of recent and coming developments, it is no longer confined to spoken word programmes in that print can now be transmitted. The development of video tape cassettes will mean that visual items can be played over to himself, when he wishes, by the pupil, just as is now usual in

distance teaching in the Open University in the case of sound cassettes.

iii. Broadcasting is the only method of instruction which does not require travel, peculiarly important to a student body less likely to have access to cars and more likely not to be in a position to drive them. The general importance of this for a mass programme should not be overlooked. If we succeeded in assembling really large masses of the population at particular points for educational purposes, we should create a massive traffic problem too. There is also the consideration of the use of fuel and other resources.

iv. Broadcasting is now an established, customary channel of communication for all public purposes, and is so regarded by its audiences.

v. Broadcast teaching can and should always be of the highest technical standard using a fund of illustrative and expository materials not available to the small class teacher, the lessons being conducted according to the best known methods. Such lessons can be rehearsed before recording, perfected in every possible way, and repeated at will, over the air and otherwise.

vi. Broadcasting can reach the illiterate, even the near-sighted, the deaf, the house-bound, the bedridden.

vii. If properly organised and handled, broadcasting should simply be cheaper than all other forms of teaching, and if pursued on a truly mass scale, it could be very cheap indeed.

viii. Broadcasting is so universal a characteristic of present communications from the outside world to the individual, that it could even be said that he has a right to receive educational stimulation from it. On this consideration, he should not be required to make the effort of leaving his own surroundings to visit a distant gathering point simply for the purpose of absorbing information.

ix. In Britain we have a tradition of excellence in broadcasting, which gives it a standing in the community, a reputation with the intellectuals and a general authority quite unparalleled in any other country which I know. This is true of the commercial television and radio companies as well as of the BBC itself. Since the foundation of the Open University, moreover, we have developed a unique tradition of distance teaching using this medium.

x. In spite of its universality, television still fascinates viewers and everything televised is still thought of as to some degree special. This fact might help to compensate for the loss of all association with high social status which may characterise the educational stimulus of the mass of the elderly.

xi. In Britain, under present circumstances, with our resources

for such an undertaking as stimulating the mass elderly by educational means being so very limited, with no prospect of a professional teaching body being established for the purpose and with the cost of travel to and from classes increasing as it is, distance teaching may be the only expedient open to us. If the ageing of the population had occurred before the development of distance teaching on television and sound radio, our dilemma would have been even greater.

Having listed the advantages and opportunities presented by the use of directed broadcasting for the purpose we have in mind, we must face its limitations and disadvantages as well. Apart from those which it shares with open-ended broadcasting, there is the fact that information delivered by broadcast means is apparently not very easily retained. Teaching, moreover, cannot be confined to the delivery of an address, however well constructed and effective. Response from the student is indispensable and in the case of distance teaching, this must imply writing letters, if not exercises. Letter writing does not come at all easily even to the literate amongst the badly educated, the elderly especially.

These considerations may negate some of the listed advantages of directed broadcasting in distance teaching to the elderly or at least seriously diminish their importance. It is notable that the Open University has found television of much less significance as a direct teaching instrument than was expected by those who pioneered it, and it is said that the Open University could do without its reserved television time. Its teaching, as is well known, has come to consist much more in correspondence lessons using the remarkable course books which have been developed, than in visual or sound broadcasts, though sound cassettes are apparently of considerable value to students.

But correspondence teaching, it is clear, makes just the type of demand on the elderly student which the working-class man and woman find unwelcome and are indeed often unable to cope with. It has been found, moreover, that reading by oneself, regarded at present as essential for education by any method, but peculiarly important in the case of distance teaching, is precisely that which those with insufficient schooling in early life are least likely to want to do. An important reason for their being in need of intellectual stimulus is because they do not habitually read, and one of the reasons why television plays such an important part in their leisure is because it occupies them without requiring the effort of reading. There has to be added to this the point that the near-sighted and hard of hearing are

able to respond much less readily to broadcasting than others and that the illiterate would be in no position to follow written instructions on the screen.

If the limitations of directed broadcasting are pursued up to this point and beyond, however, they soon become identical with the general difficulties of attempting educational stimulus of the passive mass of the elderly population. They reveal once again how little tested and accurate knowledge we have of such things and how great is the urgency of a properly established research effort to repair our ignorance. Before we turn to this, further comment should perhaps be made about the educational stimulus of the working-class mass of the population.

High intelligence, personal effectiveness, a mastery of the art of living, are associated with long years of educational experience at all ages and all levels in a society. But the two are never identical, and it is quite remarkable how impressive are the abilities, imaginative and intellectual as well as practical capacities, of working-class persons lacking formal education later than the age of twelve or thirteen. They have a quality which it is very hard to define. The most difficult problem facing the designer of a method of providing educational stimulus for the mass of the working-class elderly is to find a way both of respecting and making use of this peculiarly elusive characteristic of such persons.

(E) Topics on which new knowledge is essential if a practicable programme is to be designed

This final section begins with a discussion of the present position of relevant research in Britain and continues with a list of the topics which should be pursued. No plan of a research policy is offered as such, since it should arise in the course of experimentation with the use of television in the stimulation of the mass of the elderly.

Gerontology has grown up, as might be expected, around the medical profession and most of the scientific information about the aged and the process of ageing is physiological. Gerontological medicine is a fast growing specialism, which is to be expected since an increasing proportion of hospital beds is now filled with elderly people. The medical profession and the hospital system in fact is almost wholly responsible for the care and even for the maintenance of those who have reached the fourth age and for their experience when dying. Preparation for death could well be called the most demanding of all educational duties. The responsibilities of doctors and nurses in these directions are bound to grow with the rapid expansion of the

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

highest age groups.

Under these circumstances it is understandable that there is a very urgent need for knowledge on how it might be possible to make the elderly less dependent, more active, less likely to enter the fourth age. Hospitals for the elderly are already committed to keeping their patients within the community for as long as possible and are ceasing to accept cases for which there is any hope whatever of some sort of active life being pursued outside the institution. If it is true that the educational stimulus of the mass of the elderly could do even a small amount to prevent or postpone the attainment of the fourth age, quite apart from the assistance it might be to marginal persons still kept within the community, then it would be a relief to the medical services and a saving of resources, social as well as financial. Any new knowledge on the issues we have been discussing, therefore, must be regarded as crucial, and valuable from the point of view of efficiency.

Doctors are most decidedly not the only persons concerned with the aged, for the welfare services generally, voluntary and public, are more and more seriously engaged with them. Care of the old has been a traditional object of charity and of voluntary public service. Those who provide, or give their voluntary assistance to, day centres, homes for the elderly, housing for the elderly, meals on wheels, visits to the elderly and so on, are all likewise deeply interested in keeping the elderly as active, interested and socially involved as possible. They want them to be able to live their lives independently and away from expensive institutions, just as those who run those institutions want to know how to keep their inmates as active and alert as possible. Any knowledge, once again, any knowledge, of how to provide educational stimulus for the elderly would be of interest to a very wide circle indeed. It could only lead to an economy of resources.

Perhaps I may be allowed to pause at this point and illustrate the issue by two personal experiences. In 1948 I had occasion to visit for the BBC one of the most distinguished scientists then alive, Sir Charles Sherrington, aged 92 in that year. He was a former President of the Royal Society, which had recently held a meeting in his bedroom in the nursing home where he was living. When I presented myself there, I was informed by the sister-in-charge that, although Sir Charles was bedridden and infirm, he was a very intelligent man and was not to be spoken to as a child. Evidently in this particular case, no way had been found to keep such a man in continued and continual contact with his intellectual interests.



In the model day care centre belonging to the city of Copenhagen, in September 1979, I was shown the books on the shelves of the library. Many of them were large improving works, little borrowed and not of much use for the majority of the elderly who visited the place. Most used, of course, was the fiction and what everybody would call light literature, but nothing approaching the pornographic was to be seen. Even in the city of Copenhagen, the elderly were apparently being prevented from taking part in a literary and aesthetic movement of great vigour and importance at that time.

It is difficult to say how far occurrences of this kind are due to mistakes and inefficiency and how far to ignorance about what the elderly would want and what they would respond to. Nevertheless it is easy to fall into what might be called the pathetic fallacy of the educational idealist in respect of the aged, which brings us to our educational dilemma.

In an article published in 1978 brief reference was made to the fifth educational right set out above, the right to respect the elderly in recognition of their unique intellectual and cultural value. The same illustration, the pursuit of classical languages, was used and I found myself discussing the proposition with an old lady, once a school teacher, 86 years old and going blind. She was doubly offended, and felt rebuffed. 'Do you really expect me to take up Latin and Greek at my age? Am I to feel inadequate if I have no wish whatever to exert myself intellectually? Have I not earned the right to spend my time as I wish and to avoid any exertion which is not attractive to me?'

There are echoes here of the socially compulsive character of the traditional educational system, of the shaming expedients so widely used by would-be improvers of the mind. But once more the predominant impression is about our ignorance: we simply do not know enough about the attitudes, tastes, desires, capacities, of those whom we wish to influence for their good, as we believe, and for the good of the society which we share.

The following list refers for the most part to subjects already touched upon as important to the educational stimulus of the elderly and yet subjects on which little and sometimes nothing is so far known. Some of the topics require investigation at the fundamental level and presumably would have to be tackled by psychological laboratories and university departments of education. This is in addition to such subjects as the relative learning capacity of the elderly on which work is in train. Most of the points listed, however, could be illuminated by small scale experimentation, making greater or lesser use of broadcasting, especially television. The topics are -

The Education of the Elderly in Britain

- i. to discover all that is possible about the relationship of intellectual stimulation and the process of social ageing, disengagement and the growth of dependency.
- ii. to determine the attitude of elderly persons towards education, educational institutions and the traditional curricula. To discover how far association with official, middle-class institutions and authoritarian treatment at school may be responsible for indifference or hostility.
- iii. to establish what most interests the elderly person in relation to his own educational level, and his (her) experience since leaving school. To find ways of satisfying that interest in matters of presentation, teaching method, and to relate all these with years of schooling, subsequent job experience, income, reading and writing skills and so on.
- iv. to investigate what motivation there can be to learn when what is learnt can have no effect on subsequent life chances, where emulation is largely absent, and when useful learning can only be a small category.
- v. to evaluate possible methods of follow-up after an initial broadcasting break-through. The methods used must be calculated to be effective with those whose reading and writing skills are modest, who may find class participation difficult and who may for the most part be unwilling to do anything on their own between teaching occasions.
- vi. to give a great deal of attention to the mix between broadcasting, correspondence, class attendance and private study, in relation to the elderly student body and to develop a recipe or series of recipes suited to varying levels of previous experience, contact with education and so on. In doing this, to balance the importance of elderly pupils meeting each other out of the house against their right to be taught at home and the trouble and expense of travel. Included in such experiments would be bedridden elderly and those in institutions.
- vii. to locate retired people able and willing to become active in stimulating the mass of the elderly educationally. To make use of existing institutions initially, but to continue with members of Universities of the Third Age.
- viii. to study exhaustively the intellectual situation of those with failing hearing and failing sight. To consider the position of those in homes and hospitals in relation to nursing and administrative staff.
- ix. to investigate the difficulties associated with television as an educational medium and to discover ways, if such exist, to compensate against television dependence.
- x. to research into the attitudes and personal history of those

who respond favourably to experimentation of this kind, and, which is perhaps more important, to do the same for those who fail to respond or who drop out.

xi. to survey the potentialities for the educational stimulus of the elderly of the whole range of institutions and established activities which might be of value. Apart from universities, schools, colleges, broadcasting organisations and so on, considered in this report, there is a series of others not mentioned. They include the following -

The network of public libraries.

Local societies with intellectual pursuits, especially archaeological and historical societies, literary circles, those devoted to painting and so on, and including folk dance societies, singing clubs, etc.

The National Trust, which manages so many houses and sites particularly well suited to teaching visits: the Department of the Environment in the same context.

xii. to investigate all possible organisational forms and methods of development of a programme for the purposes in hand, bearing in mind the enormous numbers of a possible student body and the obvious dangers of gigantism and administrative overload. To consider carefully the trade union rights of teachers in employment and in retirement in relation to a teaching body for the educational stimulus of the elderly. To discover ways of building up a structure from small beginnings and in the localities. A loose federation would, it is hoped, be brought into being rather than a nationwide organisation of a bureaucratic kind.

It is not difficult to justify the judgment that the measure of the extent to which a society can be called civilised can be found in its older people and their treatment. Nor is it possible for the educator to deny that the supreme test of its activity is how he would approach persons whose only reason for learning is enlightenment, intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. Everyone of us is challenged by the education of the elderly and challenged in a way in which we can all do something about.

Chapter 3

CONTEMPLATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE

MICHEL PHILIBERT

With a grasp of English somewhat shaming to we natives, Michel Philibert does much more than recall the French origins of the Université du Troisième Age. He reflects on the functions of this new institution, underlining the benefits of socialisation, the opportunities to structure our unprecedented free-time, the chance to provide 'a yeast of regeneration for the entire academic community', and the scope available for the autonomous design of one's own learning. In a brilliant flourish, he concludes with an impressively persuasive appeal to sustain learning into the ripest old age and to reinterpret such learning constantly for the profit of all mankind. It is strongly apparent how the English counterparts of the French U3As have embraced the spirit, if not always the letter, of continental practice, especially with regard to the right of members to determine their own patterns of learning, the social value of lifelong educational provision, and the U3A critique-in-practice of the conventional educational mode.

Professeur Michel Philibert, a celebrated scholar of the University of Grenoble, has been associated with the continental U3A movement in Grenoble and elsewhere since its origins twelve years ago.

Pierre Vellas, University Professor of Political Economy, baptized L'Université du Troisième Age with a programme of lectures, concerts, guided tours and other cultural activities, which he offered in 1972, as a summer school to retired persons in Toulouse: he planned to accommodate in the halls and classrooms of the local University, deserted at this time of year, those older people who would respond.

Like all actors in human history, and the more so all pioneers and innovators, Vellas 'did not know what he was doing'. When

after a few weeks, the programme came to an end, such were the enthusiasm and determination of the participants, that, instead of preparing a repeat for the next summer, Vellas was forced to launch a programme for the forth-coming academic year, to find rooms, lectures and tutors, very soon to arrange satellite programmes in cities around Toulouse, and to comment on this experience on radio and television. In no time similar undertakings mushroomed in France and abroad, a first international colloquium on the new concept was held in Toulouse as early as May 1973, and an international Federation of Third Age Universities established.

Now, after ten years of development, can one tell the kind of future to which Third Age Universities are heading? Their development reveals a diversity of structures and a multiplicity of functions that makes any prognosis most uncertain. We shall not venture a prediction. We shall limit the ambition of this short essay to sketch out two contrasted hypotheses: their use, at the cost of oversimplifying, might eventually help us to decipher, interpret, and possibly influence, further developments.

Oversimplifying, then, we wonder whether the Universities of the Third Age will prove to have been the rear-guard or the avant-garde of a historical evolution of 'standard' universities, aiming to both adapt themselves to, and be rejuvenated by, new partners and new problems. In other terms, will these recently developing institutions, the Grand-Ma's University, appear in the coming decades as having been a futile and vain attempt to reenact Daddy's University, or as an inspired, urgently needed, and successful effort, to repattern the whole fabric of our educational set-up, and, borrowing Ivan Illitch's phrase, to deschool our society?

(A) The Functions of Universities of the Third Age

Among other possible functions of Third Age Universities we shall mention the following, after two preliminary remarks: First, any organisation or institution may have several simultaneous or successive functions; and, second, most human undertakings are meant to achieve some end, or willed effect, but have side-effects that may go beyond or against the agent's will, unplanned, unforeseen, and for some time unperceived by him and his contemporaries. So the functions of U3As we are going to describe are neither mutually incompatible nor exhaust the analysis. Their mention and evaluation is meant as a tool to accentuate or minimize some of these functions and thereby repattern the institutions.

- i. U3As contribute to help socialise or to re-socialize

Contemplating U3As.

retired people. Both increasing longevity and decreasing birth-rates make for a percentage of older persons greater than in earlier times without any family left, while generalised retirement either weakens or destroys lifelong networks of relationships with partners, colleagues, employees and clients. Isolation, and possibly loneliness, threaten retired and older persons. U3As provide a minority of them with a space for meeting and interaction not only with 'age-peers', but with three generations of people from fifty to some ninety years old, and often with opportunities for organized interaction with groups and individuals of various ages.

Other associations, clubs and communities, some open only to retired persons, senior citizens and veterans, some recruiting without age-discrimination, offer similar opportunities. But the very development of U3As, as well as the first surveys available, suggest the reality of this function of re-socialization. ii. U3As provide opportunities, stimulation, patterns and content for the use and structure of the free-time that our society gives to (or inflicts upon) those who, willy-nilly, and sometimes suddenly, disengage from paid work, from habits and schedules in-grown over decades. Assignments and social expectations that might have appeared, and be resented, as constraints reveal, when they disappear, that they were playing in our lives a structuring, supporting, cohesive role. U3As allow their members to use and structure their time in the pursuit of knowledge: it may be for knowledge's sake, for the pleasure of learning and understanding, or of developing new mental skills, for personal growth and fulfilment; it may be for preparing themselves for new roles, pursuits and activities, for making themselves more pleasant or more useful for family, friends, peers or the community, through mutual help and voluntary service. Let us not altogether forget satisfactions found in self-esteem or vanity, the challenge of competition, the pleasure in being praised or admired for one's progresses and achievements.

However powerful and ambiguous the individual motivations for studying may be, the older learner is not likely, as most young students and quite a few among younger adult learners, to be prompted to study mainly in order to get a position or a promotion, to become a more efficient and better paid producer, to make money, neither (with qualifications) to increase his power. Inasmuch as this is correct, a new function of U3As emerges, not just for their individual members but for the learning and teaching community at large, for the network of educational institutions, and their own function in the community.

iii. To the extent they contribute to promote, or to restore, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, U3As underline a dimension of knowledge that contemporary society, and not only its individual members, tends to obfuscate or indeed to pervert. We perceive knowledge as a tool for progress in efficiency, for increase in production and in productivity, for earning a living or making a fortune, for developing our power, whether personal, tribal or national, not only over our environment, but over people: other individuals, groups, nations, so as to control, abuse and exploit them. Knowledge indeed provides us with such tools. But leaving aside, for one moment, the moral and political situation in which mankind now finds itself - a most dangerous and explosive one - the status of knowledge itself might prove more precarious than its recent and dramatic progress and efficiency lead us to believe.

For centuries, science has very slowly and progressively disengaged from current opinions and beliefs, from ancient myths, from theology and ideology - in constant and dialectical interaction with philosophy - and it has been practiced and elaborated by amateurs. At first view, the accelerated pace of its progress through the 19th and more so in the 20th centuries may be explained by the fact that, beginning with the French Revolution, Western nations, once convinced science could pay in power and efficiency, made scientists paid workers and exponentially multiplied public money invested in scientific research and teaching. But that is only one side of the coin. Inasmuch as science progresses through reiteration, duplication and generalisation of what is already known, the more scientists you pay, the more rapid the pace of progress, the greater the bulk of knowledge. Once penicillin was found, due to Fleming and mainly to René Dubos, hundreds of scientists found out aureomycine, streptomycine, and many others along the same pattern.

But science progresses also by correction of former notions, revision of concepts, changes of paradigms, by borrowing from one field a concept, a method, an instrument or an hypothesis, and transplanting it in a different field, by repatterning vast areas of knowledge and expelling out of its temple previously held theories and worn-out methodologies. To that extent these progresses seem to have been made in the last two centuries by a relatively small number of individuals - and to have been grounded, in mathematics and in the experimental sciences of nature (astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology) on a basis of philosophical and scientific principles laid out by the great amateur scientist over more than two thousand years. The

confusion that presides over the so-called moral, or social, or human sciences, mostly the competing sociologies and psychologies and political economies (with the possible exception of anthropology, history and linguistics) demonstrates in our view the incapacity of the professional paid scientists, victimized by hyperspecialization, tribalism, and current or 'scientific' ideologies, to progress significantly on a ground that has not been prepared and fertilised by centuries of amateur science. And the hypothesis that even in the hard sciences the rates of productivity of research (not in quantity of publications, but in scientific quality) might now be decreasing, seems plausible.

To that extent, the gratuitous, amateurish character of U3A learning, study and research might become a yeast of regeneration for the entire academic community. The same could obtain, as we shall submit in the next paragraph, as regards the U3A teaching procedures.

iv. The French school system leaves to the children, as pupils, and French Universities to young people, as students, practically no autonomy in the design, the pace, the schedule and the content of their study; their learning is parcelled out into small bits and pieces. Teachers lead them not so much on the ground of the authority that their knowledge, and their ability to share it, could support, but because as grown-ups, they are more or less in loco parentis, and as civil servants, representatives of the ruling political and social system. One should expect that, in continued education, in adult education, learners would be more critical of mediocre teachers, more autonomous in designing and managing their own learning; one might hope that the redevelopment (in France) of adult education, would teach the teachers new ways of teaching, more respectful of the initiative, interest and idiosyncrasies of their students; one might hope these teachers (and their students as parents) would transfer to schools these new and better methods, for the benefit of children. But it did not, it does not currently happen, for two reasons: firstly, after fifteen to twenty-five years of schooling, most adults are either so disgusted by education that they will never venture into continued education, or so well adjusted to the system that they will never imagine that learning might be anything else than being fed with ready-made thoughts by teachers who know better. Secondly, the most frequent motivation (in France) for venturing into continued education is to get a diploma and a better salary or position, and the best way to achieve this is to learn uncritically whatever the teacher teaches, so as to pass the examination in repeating him verbatim what he said.

To be frank, some of the older and retired learners, members of U3As, have the same receptive and sometimes passive, approach as their juniors; with U3A audiences often more respectful of Universities and Professors than younger students. This is an effect of generation, not of age, and they have to bear with quite a few lecturers who, finding them more polite and more grateful than rebellious children or angry, anxious and bitter students, indulge in conceit, pomposity, tyranny and revenge.

Despite such adverse circumstances, U3A audiences include a higher percentage than the average population of liberated, bold and creative men and women, who do not attend because they are after money, power, position or prestige, and are quite able to teach their teachers better ways.

v. The last function of U3As that we shall mention here is that their 'third age' participants, inasmuch as they demand to be treated as partners, and not merely as objects of research, as participants in study, and not merely as receptacles of teaching, may well use the opportunity to prepare themselves for a new period of their life, for new tasks and commitments. We have indeed mentioned this point in our paragraph - 'preparing themselves for new roles, pursuits, and activities' - but we want to add that 'old age' today is not only a new period (and the last) in the life course of the individual. It is today a new period in the history of mankind. This will be elaborated on in the last part of this chapter.

And yet U3As are threatened by elitism and by age-segregation. The trouble here is perhaps less age-segregation per se than its use as a decoy to camouflage, under the ambiguous label 'third age', a middle-class, elitist discrimination against lower-middle and working classes.

U3As are exposed to the risk of being used as an innocent, enjoyable, and finally futile pastime. Let us remember what Montaigne wrote in the last chapter of his Essays; he is very near the end of the book and not so far from the end of his life: 'I have a vocabulary all my own. I pass the time, when it is rainy and disagreeable; when it is good, I do not want to pass it; I savor it, I cling to it. We must run through the bad and settle on the good. This ordinary expression "pastime" or "pass the time" represents the habit of those wise folk who think they can make no better use of their life than to let it slip by and escape it, pass it by, sidestep it, and, as far as in them lies, ignore it and run away from it, as something irksome and contemptible. But I know it to be otherwise and find it both agreeable and worth prizing, even in its last decline, in which I now possess it; and

nature has placed it in our hands adorned with such favourable conditions that we have only ourselves to blame if it weighs on us and if it escapes us unprofitably. "The life of the fool is joyless, full of trepidation, given over wholly to the future (Seneca)". However, I am reconciling myself to the thought of losing it without regret, but as something that by its nature must be lost; not as something annoying and troublesome. Then too, not to dislike dying is properly becoming only to those who like living. It takes management to enjoy life. I enjoy it twice as much as others, for the measure of enjoyment depends on the greater or lesser attention that we lend it. Especially at this moment, when I perceive that mine is so brief in time, I try to increase it in weight; I try to arrest the speed of its flight by the speed with which I grasp it, and to compensate for the haste of its ebb by my vigor in using it. The shorter my possession of life, the deeper and fuller I must make it'. (Montaigne, Essays, transl. Donald M. Frame, Stanford Univ. Press (1957) p. 853).

Threatened - or tempted - by elitism and pastime activism, U3As might indulge in narcissism and escapism and miss altogether the highest vocation they should respond to. Before briefly formulating how we conceive it, let us analyze the perennial and continuing motivations that make continued education a must for each and every human being, and demand from older people the highest achievements.

(B) Universities of the Third Age: Discerning the Signs of the Times.

Frank Harris in My Life and Loves gives praise to Alfred Russell Wallace's 'very simple and great nature' in the following terms: 'It is by the heart we grow, and Wallace kept himself so sincere, so kindly, that he grew in wisdom to the very end of his life instead of stopping, as most men and women stop growing mentally almost before their bodily growth is completed'.

The new born human baby is in a condition of incapacity, ignorance, and dependency from his elders and betters more radical than the offspring of any other animal species. He is also endowed with a need, a desire, and a capacity to learn, to acquire knowledge and know-hows, far exceeding that of other animals. Children will learn more, more easily and more rapidly, through the first years of their lives, than later on. But there is so much to learn to be able to function autonomously that a number of years is necessary, sometimes less than the number required to reach their full size and complete their bodily growth. But about that time, they will usually master roughly the equivalent in knowledge and skills of most grown ups; they will be accepted as such and will become in their turn workers, producers,

soldiers, parents, caregivers, educators, citizens. Throughout childhood and early youth, their main occupation is learning. Once engaged in work, parenthood, trade, responsibilities, some people do, and some do not, keep on learning. In many cases, as remarks Harris, 'people stop growing mentally', they stop learning, using till they die the stock of knowledge and capacities they have acquired in their first and only years of learning. Humans can stop learning, but they ought not.

So great are the ignorance and dependency of infants and young children that they have to receive from parents or elders most of the knowledge and skills, including mental skills, to speak, to listen, to think, to discipline emotions and feelings, attitudes and behaviour. Among the three classical definitions of truth - agreement with other minds, agreement with reality, agreement of the mind with itself through its successive statements - the child cannot but begin by agreeing with others. Thus the child, while acquiring indispensable mental skills, notions, ways, and many useful bits and pieces of knowledge, theoretical and pragmatic, will also receive, accept and make his own, a huge amount of myths, stereotypes, prejudices, biases, errors, delusions and nonsense, and inevitably will harbour them as being right, true, normal, obvious and congenial. Error having the same form and the same function as the truth, he will not search for a truth he believes he already possesses; he may well reject, deny and fight the truth, if and when it will cross his mind, as being antagonistic with what he takes for true.

This explains why he can, and should, keep on learning. The most difficult and important part of learning begins when the first stock, needed for practical purposes, is acquired; and it consists mostly in un-learning, in de-learning, what one has been learning so far. It is a task to be pursued over the entire life course, and we shall die, even in advanced old age, without having done with it.

Mankind has known for a long time that growing old does not entail growing wiser. 'It is not only the old who are wise, or the aged who understand what is right', says young Elihu in the Book of Job, angry with the three older friends of Job, unable to persuade him of his guilt. His Fool says to Lear: 'If thou wert my fool, n'uncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time'. Lear: 'How's that?' Fool: 'Thou should'st not have been old till thou hadst been wise'.

But if age is not a sufficient condition to reach wisdom, and, if a few young people exhibit a maturity far exceeding their years, age usually remains a necessary condition to advance in wisdom, because truth can appear only as correction of a former error;

wisdom grows when we begin to understand in retrospect that we did not know what we were doing, we did not will what we figured we wanted, we did not experience what we fancied feeling.

Any action, experience, event or sequence in our past lives we have been interpreting already at least three times. We gave it a first meaning in anticipation: project and prevision, fear, hope and expectation, prayer, wish, preparation and prevention, reasoning and fancying. Then it occurred; we acted, or suffered, we were in medias res; and it was more or less different from our anticipation; we had to readjust our behaviour, to modify our strategy, to reappraise our ends and means, our capacities and our shortcomings, to reinterpret the situation, to repattern our projects. Later on, when we look in retrospect at the past event, we do not give it the meaning we gave it in anticipation, neither the meaning it suggested when present. It has been developing unwilling effects, unanticipated consequences, it now appears in a different context, filled up by all that we went through since it happened; and our criteria to rate its importance, to assess its meaning, may have changed over time: they are our present tastes and convictions, engagements and responsibilities, our present projects and expectations, fears and hopes. If we do not stop growing, we shall have to reinterpret our life till the end; its unity and meaning must be recreated every day, we must reinterpret and redirect it in integrating what our own deeds and words, our own whims and fancies, and the accidents and the necessities have brought into it.

The most important task of older people is the reinterpretation of their life. It is important to them. It is no less important to all of us, because their lives have been shared and mixed with those of their parents, siblings, mates, partners, children, colleagues, fellow workers and citizens, with the history of their village and nation, of their profession and creed, with a sequence in Man's History; and we need whatever light their reinterpretation, their evaluation, their repentance may shed on our own life and history, so as to know how we wish and should orientate and lead it from where we are now. Here lies the most important task and function that U3A should systematically develop.

This reinterpretation of their own life and our common history has always been the most outstanding contribution of older people to their community and to the human community.

It is today more important than ever before. Not only it is the first time in human history that most people born alive have a chance to live into old age; not only it is the first time in human history that we have so many older people available to

help us confronting our experiences and expectations, reinterpreting our experiences and redirecting our expectations; not only it is the first time in human history that people from three to five different generations can coexist and interact for so many years and decades, and this potential has not been really explored and exploited, but it is also the first time in human history that mankind is challenged to find out the ways to live as one - because for the first time in its history it has conquered the actual capacity to destroy itself as one, once and for all. Like King Lear, many old fools could age and die, in their last decades, before having been wise. But never before our days have human fools been given the capacity of destroying the human kind. Our foolishness is more dangerous than it ever was, because never before has the gap been so wide between our science and power, and our continued lack of wisdom; never before has the human need of wisdom been so urgent. The two or three generations of older people now living are and will remain unique in the history of mankind. They are the last living humans born in the prenuclear period of history. They are the last and the first older people in history whose search and strife for wisdom must succeed, if history is to continue.

Some sixty years ago George Stanley Hall - a prophetic soul! - wrote in his book Senescence: 'There is a rapport between us oldsters and we understand each other almost esoterically. We must accept and recognize this better knowledge of this stage of life as part of our present duty in the community. We have a function in the world that we have not yet risen to and which is of the utmost importance - far greater, in fact, in the present stage of the world than ever before, and that new and culminating service can only be seen and prepared for by first realizing what ripe and normal age is, means, can, should and now must do, if our race is to achieve its true goal'.

Do these words convey the dreams of an old fool, or the lucid deciphering of our time by a wise old man? Reader, decide.

Chapter 4

THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE FOR U3As

DAVID RADCLIFFE

David Radcliffe, associate professor of the Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario, is a comparative educationist with a specialist reputation in educational gerontology. In 1980-81 he spent a year's study leave with Age Concern England and the Extra-Mural Studies Department of the University of London during which he surveyed recent developments in educational opportunities for the elderly in Western Europe. It would be difficult to find anyone better to place the first stirrings of British activity in a worldwide context.

In several instances in this chapter he quotes his own translations from other languages, avoiding over-literal awkwardnesses and helpfully using English idioms which carry the proper sense of the original.

(A) Fire from Olympus

Philippe Aries in his book L'enfance et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime (Paris 1960), published in England as Centuries of Childhood (London 1962), drew attention to the 'discovery' of childhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He related this to the development of formal schooling, and to the dominant model for education systems and learning opportunities which are primarily linked to childhood and adolescence. The concept of adolescence emerged in the late nineteenth century, and some would argue that adolescence has been the preferred age of the mid-twentieth century. But we are perhaps on the brink of an even more dramatic change in the perception of the human life-course with the emergence, in the late twentieth century, of what the French have chosen to call the Third Age, 'Le Troisième Âge'. As defined by Serge Mayence, second president of the International Association of Universities of the Third Age, 'The third age is that time of life when, having ceased any occupational

activity, men and women enjoy total independence.' In other words, it corresponds to retirement from 'the world of work', but it includes an assertion that this is a whole new age, with its own validity to be established. It can be distinguished from 'le quatrième âge', the fourth age of renewed and increasing dependence on others, but the two are closely related, for third age thought being implicitly positive, carries the belief that with appropriate recognition, acceptance, and emphasis, a good third age can minimize the adjustments and deficits, and indeed the duration of the fourth age.

There is a great deal of demographic justification in the sociological perception of the Third Age as a whole new age in human experience, without historical precedent, for although it seems that three-score years and ten (or by latest calculations four-score years and five) has always been mankind's optimum lot, never before has such a large proportion of the population had reasonable expectations of attaining it. We are therefore dealing with a 'whole new age for the old', as Maggie Kuhn, founder of the American Gray Panthers, has put it. But, in examining the popular movement that has led to the establishment of the Universities of the Third Age in France, and which has rapidly attracted international attention and spread to other countries, it is important at the outset to recognise another element, another axis which cuts across the ageing dimension. This is the dimension of social status and occupation; employment and participation; social worth and self respect. While the Universities of the Third Age have developed in response to needs that are particularly perceived by older persons who have retired from the years of occupational activity and status, and who seek to turn this erstwhile retreat into an advance into a new autonomy of life-style, these needs are not peculiar to the later years. For this reason, therefore, it is evident that the definition of the Third Age brings with it implicit challenges to established conventions about the relationships between chronological age, education, occupation, and social status, across the whole life course.

Michel Philibert explained in chapter 3 that 'Université du Troisième Age' was first proposed by Prof. Pierre Vellas, of the Université des Sciences Sociales in Toulouse, in 1973. As well as a lecture and seminar programme, Vellas was also interested in the opportunity for research, particularly socio-medical research relating to the vitality of life in the later years, with which those enrolled in the programme could co-operate. Initially there was nothing exceptional about this programme, apart from the fact that one section of a large provincial French

university had taken an interest in the problems of ageing, and decided to enlist the resources of the whole university in a programme for senior citizens which would at the same time provide some returns in helping to define the needs of older persons. What is important is that the initiative in Toulouse struck a rich vein of motivation, with the result that this local, provincial, summer experiment was taken over by the student body of senior citizens and parlayed into a year-round programme. More than this, it immediately became the seed-bed from which the concept was disseminated across France and internationally.

From the summer of 1973 in Toulouse the proliferation of the U3A concept has been quite phenomenal. The idea quickly crossed international frontiers. Already by 1975 there were beginnings of U3A programmes in Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, Spain, the U.S.A., and Quebec in Canada. In that year, as a result of discussions held at Charleroi in Belgium in 1974, an International Association of the Universities of the Third Age (IAUTA) was founded at a congress in Toulouse, and since then annual congresses have been held in different centres; Lille 1976, Toulouse 1977, Namur (Belgium) 1978, Nancy 1979, Sherbrooke (Canada) 1980, Madrid (Spain) 1981, Nice 1982, and Riva Del Garda (Italy) 1983.

It is interesting to note that it was not until December 1980 that any national organisation was established in France. In that year the Union Française des Universités du Troisième Age (U.F.U.T.A.) was founded, under the presidency of Prof. René Frentz of Nancy, and with a secretariat hosted by the M.G.E.N. Club des Retraités de la Région Parisienne, under the care of M. Pierre Brasseul, as first Secretary-General. In striking contrast to the normal French tradition in education, therefore, the U3A movement in France has been not only primarily provincial and decentralised, but it has also had strong international tendencies from its inception. This aspect leads one to ask whether or not there is something particular in the U3A's character which is a challenge to French educational traditions, which thus contributes to the patently self-conscious sense of innovation in the U3A, and to the movement's vitality.

The U3A is rightly described as an idea and a movement. In France each centre is a local foundation and a uniquely local variant of the theme. Some have been established as separate constituents of an established University (Centres, Institutes, or Colleges), and others came about through association between a university and a government or municipal department responsible for the welfare of older persons. Several are the direct creations not of a university but of local government, and the allocation of

funds to such an institution has been featured in local government elections. Some, and of these Grenoble is a prime example, are wholly independent associations. Michel Philibert himself, from his base at the Centre Pluridisciplinaire de G rontologie, was a prime mover in the introduction of the idea in Grenoble in January 1976, but the U3A is self-directed, and in effect negotiates with the various university centres in the town for the programmes it wishes to set up. In Paris, the programme at Nanterre (Paris X) is an integral part of the University under the tutelage of the Institut d'Education Permanente, but at the same time it had an agreement by which it assisted in programmes negotiated by the M. G. E. N. Club des Retrait s (a retired teachers' association). However, in late 1983 there were changes in the M. G. E. N. organisation which have closed this particular programme.

While this diversity of structure, and of financial support and resources, permits the kind of flexibility which allows for a proliferation of centres, there is considerable concern not only for stability and security, but also for credibility. Indeed one of the problems faced by the U. F. U. T. A. in 1980 at its formation, and since then, has been the definition of what qualifies for membership, and what kinds of programmes and organisations are eligible to become members. It is indeed a very touchy question, tempering the enthusiasm which has led to such a rapid proliferation with concern that the good news should not be compromised. In 1983 U. F. U. T. A. counted thirty-one members, with programmes established in some one hundred and thirty centres. The Union also noted a further sixteen institutions which had taken the name U3A, but which did not belong, either by choice or because they did not meet the statutory requirements of the Union. These requirements appear to turn on a debate over the meaning of the word 'Universit '. In a report prepared for the Assises Nationales des Retrait s et Personnes Ag es held in Paris in March 1983 M. Jean Peuziat identifies three broad areas of activity that make up the mission of the U3A: instruction, productive research, and personal development. While recognising the diversity of previous educational achievement among those who participate, and holding to the principle that the qualification for entry should be defined by personal motivation, however, he argues that, 'Nevertheless, in order to preserve the credibility of the label 'University', it is desirable to increase the proportion of university faculty instructors, in order to qualify for resources appropriate to universities.' Prof. Ren  Frentz of Nancy, in his opening address to the first national conference of U. F. U. T. A., in September 1981, also noted the principle of the Union that all members should have a

direct link ('lien organique réel') with a recognised and established university.

This in effect poses again the issue, raised earlier in the chapter, of the U3A as in some measure an expression of a counter-culture, the resort of those to whom a fair measure of educational opportunity has been denied. Again to quote M. Peuziat there are claims 'such as this phrase from a worker who had quit school at twelve years: "The State owes me four years of schooling".' It is from this well-spring of interest that we find in France as the movement grew a tendency to broaden and qualify the name: Université du Troisième Age et des Temps Disponible (and of uncommitted time) at Nancy, Université du milieu de la vie (of the middle years) et du Troisième Age of the Institut Catholique in Paris, Université du Troisième Age et pour tous (and for all) at St Etienne, Université Tous Ages (all ages) at Lyons, Centre Universitaire Interâges (intergenerational) at Grenoble, and Université Populaire du Troisième Age at Mulhouse. The list of formulations could be extended, but the message and implications are clear. The U3A is not only significant for the elderly, it is also quite consciously, in France at least, a challenge in support of the right to life-long education. Indeed the first demand of the Peuziat report referred to above, in its summary of propositions, is 'that there should be solemn recognition at the highest level of State authority, in a declaration and in official documents, of the right of all citizens to benefit throughout the life-course from permanent education adapted to their needs and their capacities.' When we come to the second demand in this document, which places a peculiar responsibility on the established Universities to support what is posed as a recasting ('refonte') of the whole structure of education, we begin to catch a sense of the belief among some adherents that the U3A has undertaken no less than a Promethean task of bringing fire from Olympus.

(B) U3As: The Worldwide Movement

It is important to appreciate something of the quality of the movement as it has developed in France, in order to assess its role and impact in other countries. The term 'University' does not necessarily carry the same meaning or definition of role and organisation in all societies. And even where the institutions themselves may be broadly similar in organisation and function, there may be considerable differences in social perceptions and aspirations, in accessibility and opportunity. One must ask whether, even if this phenomenon is 'the answer' to a French question, it is equally the answer to a need which is perceived

in another society. Nevertheless it is significant that the International Association of the Universities of the Third Age predated U. F. U. T. A. by six years, and that by 1983, ten years after its inception, the Association counted some one hundred and ten institutions established in Argentina, Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, West Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the U. S. A. This does not exhaust the list of countries, which it would be hard to document, where there are, as in France, institutions which have taken inspiration from the concept and are even using the name but which for one reason or another have not formally applied for membership in I. A. U. T. A; even distant countries such as Japan, China and Ghana.

It will be evident from the imprecision of the count that the concept of establishing a University of the Third Age outreaches the grasp not only of the Union Française but also of the International Association too, but while this may suggest a certain laxity of definition of precisely what the phenomenon is, it is at the same time evidence that the idea strikes a responsive chord in a wide variety of communities. At the same time, as we cross international boundaries, we merge paths and travel together with other models such as programmes for seniors in the Scandinavian Folk High Schools, Elderhostel in the U. S. A., and programmes such as Birmingham's FIR-cone or the Bedford Retirement Education Centre in the U. K. This is dictated necessarily not only by social and cultural variations, but also by the administrative and legal differences between different national provisions for the establishment and funding of adult education programmes, and by local laws which govern the formation of popular associations.

Nevertheless, before examining some of the different ways in which U3A outside of France have come into being, it is worth noting the basic similarities which unite them. Charlotte Nusberg, writing on educational opportunities for the elderly in industrialised countries, in Educational Gerontology (Vol. 8, No. 1, July-August 1982), has identified a list of common characteristics which seem to represent the objectives of organisations participating in the international U3A movement. These are: (i) programmes to 'enhance older persons' mental and physical well-being and ward off the symptoms that can occur with aging', (ii) stimulation of 'older persons' social contacts with both their age peers and other age groups', (iii) the democratisation of education 'by reaching out to groups that have been neglected by universities in the past, such as the elderly', (iv) 'to raise the social consciousness of older students and make them more militant on their own behalf', (v) 'to seek to stimulate their students to participate more actively in the life around them through volunteer work of various

kinds and involvement in other community activities', and (vi) 'to be responsive to local needs and interests.' This last objective is particularly significant in countries which had been accustomed to a more superimposed, centralised and directive tradition in educational programming.

The majority of U3A outside of France appear to have developed on a local basis, usually at the initiative of an individual associated with a university who has heard of the concept and sees it as a solution to problems which have already been locally identified. The Université du Troisième Age, in such cases, gave a name, and perhaps in some cases a degree of focus to proposals that were already in the process of formulation. This, obviously enough, was the case with the initiative in Britain. The desire to promote new programmes specifically for older persons, going significantly beyond what was already available, had been converging towards definition for several years before this. Already a wholly indigenous movement had become focussed by Age Concern, the Centre for Policy on Ageing, Help the Aged, The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, the Pre-Retirement Association, and other interests in the formulation of F. R. E. E. (the Forum of the Rights of the Elderly to Education) in 1980. It is even more difficult to say precisely what the idea of a University of the Third Age, though elegantly presented by Michel Philibert with due regard for British sensitivities towards a French concept, has added to this wholly indigenous fermentation of ideas. Perhaps this is the genius of Pierre Vellas, not to have invented a new model, but quite simply to have given a name to an idea whose time had come, not only in Toulouse, but simultaneously in many other places too. This has been called the 'Aha effect!'

Britain is a comparative latecomer to the movement. For obvious reasons it was quick to be heard of in the Francophone world. In Belgium at Charleroi in 1975, Prof. Serge Mayence of the Institut Européen Inter-universitaire de l'Action Sociale established a programme that was soon emulated at Tournai, Mons, Nivelles and La Louvière. Prof. Mayence became the second president of the International Association in 1978. In 1980 the presidency passed to Prof. Roger Bernier of Canada, who had been active in establishing programmes at his own Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec, from where the idea was carried to Hull and Victoriaville both in Quebec, and Moncton, New Brunswick. So far no Anglophone Canadian centres have associated with the movement, though the name has in part been adopted by T. A. L. A., the Third-Age Learning Association, founded by Mrs Janet McPhee, herself a senior student, in 1979, and based at Glendon College

Campus of York University in Toronto. T. A. L. A. is not itself a University of the Third Age, though Glendon's programmes would qualify, but an association analogous to FREE in the UK. T. A. L. A. has national aspirations but is presently primarily active in Ontario.

In Spain the movement took a more directive approach. In June 1978 Sr. Francisco Garrido Verdu, Director of the Institute Superior de Complemento de Estudios, Valladolid, was charged by the Director-General for Community Development of the Ministry of Culture with the task of developing a plan for the introduction of the U3A concept across the country. In September of the same year the Ministry signed agreements with appropriate institutions in twenty-one major population centres for the establishment of 'Aulas de Tercera Edad.' As a result, and in contrast with all other cases, Spain is unique in being able to show a co-ordinated approach summarised in an impressive document describing in detail, and centre by centre, the establishment of the national system, in its first year (Aulas de Tercera Edad, Memoria, Curso 1978-79, Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid 1980).

The Spanish system, for that is indeed the proper word for this case, was planned and put into operation in consultation with Prof. Vellas, and the twenty-one original centres plus three more added subsequently joined the International Association en bloc at the Congress of Nancy in 1979. Spain even offers a basic 'elemental' definition, or statement of purpose, which may be worth quoting: 'The Aulas de Tercera Edad are sociocultural centres where senior citizens may acquire new knowledge of significant issues, or validate the knowledge which they already possess, in an agreeable milieu and in accordance with easy and acceptable methods, with the objective of preserving their vitality and participating in the life of the community.' It may be argued that the Spanish system seems to be in distinct contradiction to the principle of local initiative which informs the movement in other countries. To a degree this is true, but it must be pointed out that in Spain this comes at a time when the whole educational system is undergoing a significant and sweeping reformulation introduced by the national policy document La Educacion en España; Bases para una política educativa, 1969. This document, Spain's first real educational reform in over a century, incorporates much of the latest thought on life-long education, and is itself a significant attempt to democratise education and make it a matter of public and popular responsibility. It is indeed a re-casting of the system of the dimensions called for by the U. F. U. T. A. in France. While it is yet too soon to see how well the implementation of these educational reforms will progress in

Spain, given the political and social adjustments that are taking place in the post-Franco years, it would be fair to argue that in principle and in theory, in Spain more than anywhere, the Ministry of Education is formally committed to a course of development which is quite consonant with the standard U3A model, and is therefore giving it a fair wind. Certainly a perusal of the resulting programmes in local centres and the organisational structures that have come into being through this Ministry initiative suggests that the process is very similar to what is happening in other countries, in terms of local involvement.

With such a rapid proliferation it would be difficult to complete an exhaustive list of U3As, particularly since, as has been pointed out, the adoption of the term tends to outrun formal affiliation with the Association. Italy should be mentioned as one of the earlier associates of the movement, with centres in Florence, Rome, Turin, Milan and Trento. Professor Antonini, holder, since 1957, of the first Italian chair in Gerontology, at the University of Florence, has been active in I. A. U. T. A. since 1975. In 1982 he established the Università di Tempo Libero, an all-age institution sponsored by the University and the City of Florence. The USA also has shown interest with seven centres including the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, and the Institute for Retired Professionals in New York. Two of the USA programmes, in San Diego and at the University of Missouri at Rolla, have adopted the name University of the Third Age. As an example, the University of Missouri at Rolla, which in 1977 was the first in the USA to import the name, operates a U3A programme through five campus centres, at Rolla, Columbia, Kansas City, St Louis, and Jefferson City, and each of these five centres services three satellites within its own twenty-five miles radius. This programme was initiated by the University's Center for Aging Studies, very appropriately, for the Ozark region which claims the highest density of older persons in the States, after Florida.

Of particular interest, in view of the social and political issues that have exercised the country recently, is the U3A movement in Poland. Prof. Helena Swarc of the Post-Diploma Medical Centre of the University of Warsaw met Prof. Vellas at a conference of gerontologists in Milan in April 1975. In October that year she obtained permission from its Director to make use of Centre facilities to develop a Uniwersytet III Wieku. Following a successful first year, the University joined the I. A. U. T. A. in 1976, and in the same year a sister institution opened in Wrocław. Initially the programmes depended on aid in time given by teachers, and in space from institutions of higher learning, but in 1978 a

grant-in-aid was received from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. New centres were opened in Posnan, Szczecin and Opolu, and in subsequent years further centres have been created in Gdansk, Lodz, Krakow, Katowice and Gliwice. The Polish movement has actively promoted the idea at conferences in other Eastern European countries and the USSR, although at this time the only specific case of adoption seems to be the Seniors' University sponsored by Humboldt University in Berlin. However Poland seems to see itself as having a special mission in mediating the concept from west to east. The programmes of the Polish U3A show an interesting blend of Polish cultural patriotism, exemplified in inaugural addresses that tend to highlight major themes and events in Polish history, with an earnest internationalism that cultivates and cherishes the opportunity of links with other members of the association, through the teaching of foreign languages (a choice of eighteen in Warsaw in 1982) and literature. There is also a strong emphasis on social and medical research into the conditions of an active and healthy third age. The events of 1981-82 caused a temporary suspension of activities from December to February, but the programme returned vigorously in 1982-83.

In a short period the idea of a University of the Third Age has gained not only international recognition, but also, and perhaps more importantly, local meaning for many elderly persons who want (to quote the title of a Beth Johnson Foundation publication that cannot be bettered) something 'Beyond Bingo and Condescension'. On the international scene the International Association of the Universities of the Third Age has become a recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with accreditation to the United Nations, UNESCO, WHO, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. It has a permanent Secretariat at the University of Toulouse, and its own Documentation Centre at the European Interuniversity Institute for Social Action, at Marcinelle, in Belgium. Locally, the concept seems to have given effective impetus and outlet to a growing demand among older persons for the recognition of educational rights and the creation of educational opportunities. It is true that there are limitations, one of which seems to be a social class bias which is conditioned by the patterns of educational opportunity previously prevailing. The U3A initially attracts those who have had at least secondary education, and many who have had a university education. Typically, as is the case in adult education, those who receive are those who have had some before. But these are encouraging signs that in seeing its role as a special response to a particular kind of educational deprivation, the movement has

identified a primary issue of educational imbalance. Research programmes in many centres, conducted by the elderly themselves, which are trying to identify the causes and clarify the issues of the loss of social status in the Third Age, illustrate the fact that chronological age itself is a characteristic but not a necessary determining factor. Therefore they contribute to a new perception of forces which govern inequality of educational opportunity, and contribute to a restructuring of education that challenges not only ageist stereotypes but also other impediments to a learning society.

Chapter 5

SELF-HELP LEARNING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN LATER LIFE

PAULA ALLMAN

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Paula Allman begins from the now accepted, if scarcely popularly believed, proposition that 'an adult's age has nothing to do with his or her ability to learn'. She then analyses the learning processes of an educational approach with which she has been primarily concerned and which she claims is an alternative to traditional 'pedagogics', with its emphasis on the acquiring of knowledge and skills. Paula Allman's positive insistence on a collective process of dialogue and reflection in the 'peer learning group' and her admirable recognition of the potential of adults 'to exercise control over their own learning' offers the 'mutual aid university' its own psychological rationale. The plea by Michael Young for the liberation of people to determine their own actions, often in co-operative ventures; Peter Laslett's requirement that U3A members should teach, or otherwise help, as well as learn; Michel Philibert's yearning for adults perpetually un-learning, de-learning and re-learning; all these strands are touched by, and in turn touch, Paula Allman's belief in and justification of self-help learning. More so than other chapters, this one of its nature quotes from a series of learned sources. These are alluded to by author's name and date, and the full list of references is appended to the end chapter in alphabetical order.

I would expect that everyone who reads this book shares the

belief that an adult's age has nothing to do with his or her ability to learn. Some readers will hold that belief because they have witnessed their own experience while others will have observed the experiences of the growing numbers of older people who are continuing their learning and doing so just as effectively as their younger counterparts. These beliefs and observations have received substantive support from the past decade of American (Schaie, 1975; Labouvie-Vief) and British (Huppert, 1982) research which has so aptly demonstrated that there is no valid evidence of inevitable decline in learning ability with age.

Of course the ability to learn, at any age, depends upon one's ability to think, or what psychologists call cognitive or intellectual aptitude. During the 1970s, research into ageing and intellectual aptitude was conducted according to approaches which improved upon many of the faults which were inherent in previous research designs. The results of that research helped to dispel 'the myth of intellectual or cognitive decline' in the later years - at least the myth was purged from the thinking of most psychologists. Unfortunately, amongst the public in general, a negative stereotype of ageing persists. This is partly because many people still confuse unhealthy or pathological ageing (which only affects a small minority of older people) and healthy ageing. The resilience of the negative image of age is maintained by a variety of social and psychological factors not the least of which is our own personal fear of ageing and eventual death. If we could lay our stereotypical thinking about ageing aside and with it our fears of ageing, we would discover that whether a person is declining or progressing at any age depends on his or her health and on the degree to which and the quality with which a person interacts with other people and with ideas and issues - in other words the interaction of people with the total social and historical context in which they live.

This chapter is only indirectly related to the previously mentioned research which I have discussed in full elsewhere (Allman, 1981, 1982). I have mentioned it so that readers might be assured that their belief in older people's learning potential is a sound one. I have also referred to that research because it has led to the serious study of adult psychological development which has in turn begun to revolutionise our thinking about adulthood. It is this relatively new and very exciting branch of psychological study which has the most to say to us about learning and development during the adult years. And I hope to show that what it says points very clearly to the appropriateness and extreme relevance of the self-help learning process during the later years of life.

(A) The Importance of Experience in Adult Thought and the Nature of Adult Development

Prior to the late 1970's our study of adulthood was stymied by the fact that most of our concepts, theories and ideas about thinking or intellectual/cognitive aptitude were derived from the study of children and adolescents. Coupled with a social and legal system that recognizes the advent of maturity sometime towards the end of adolescence, we were left with the dual notions that adults were developed, ie. mature, and that, with reference to their thinking abilities, we could expect adults to be capable of thinking like a fully developed or mature adolescent.

According to child and adolescent developmental psychology, this mature thought, or the processes of which mature thought is constituted, conform to the model of formal or propositional logic (Piaget, 1972). Thinking with formal logic involves being able to disassociate the processes of thought from the content of thought: therefore, one becomes capable of abstract thinking. It also involves being able to deduce the variables from a given problem and systematically, that is, by instituting controls, to test each variable and each combination of variables until a solution to the problem is reached. For example, a typical Piagetian test of formal thinking would be to ask someone to determine what factor or factors cause the velocity of a pendulum's swing. To solve this problem one must deduce which variables might be involved, such as the length of the string, the height from which the weight is dropped, the variation in possible weights. Each variable must be tested in isolation and in combination with all other variables held constant until the correct solution is derived. It is the process used to arrive at the correct solution which the psychologist focusses upon rather than the solution or correct answer, because the process implies the underlying thought structure or stage of cognitive development.

A great deal of research into the extent of formal operational thought amongst adult had indicated that this type of thinking, was not very prevalent amongst adult (Papalia and Bielby, 1974). Piaget had not studied adults but when asked to reflect upon these findings he noted (Piaget, 1972) that adults would probably only display formal thought on problems for which they had an aptitude. Therefore if we can assume a connection between aptitude and the types of experience an adult seeks out in work and leisure, it is in problems of this sort that we would be more likely to find adults employing thinking according to a model of formal logic. Sinnott (1975) confirmed this hypothesis when he derived a series of problems which, whilst demanding formal logic, were framed within content pertinent to typical adult life

Self-Help Learning

experiences. In fact Piaget himself had hinted at the importance of experience in a much earlier discussion of adolescence.

'... Adolescent egocentricity is manifested by a belief in the omnipotence of reflection, as though the world should submit itself to idealistic schemes rather than to systems of reality..... so the metaphysical egocentricity of the adolescent is gradually lessened as a reconciliation between formal thought and reality is effected.'

(Piaget, 1967, pp.63-64)

About the same time that we began to recognize the importance of experience to adult thinking, psychologists began to question whether other types of thinking structures might develop during adulthood and whether experience might not change the nature of formal logic in some manner so as to render it qualitatively more adaptive in terms of functioning effectively as a mature adult.

I shall attempt to describe chronologically the research and theoretical responses to these questions and to offer a tentative model of the types of thinking which can develop during the adult years as well as a model for the process of adult development. Any such model must be tentative for two reasons. Firstly, the concerted study of adulthood has only just begun in relative terms. And, secondly, we now recognize that the potential for development during adulthood is inter-related with individuals' interactions with a social and historical context which is itself dynamic. Therefore as a consequence of social and historical change people may need to develop progressively adaptive ways of thinking. Nevertheless this tentative model points to some clear implications for adult learning which seriously challenge some of our traditional assumptions and practices of adult education.

Arlin (1975) was the first to offer research results which challenged our traditional notions about the adults' thinking potential. The results of her study revealed that the ability to ask or discover important questions develops subsequent to the stage of formal operation which results in deriving the answers to questions and solutions to problems. Neugarten's research (1977) into middle-aged people's thinking strategies identified an increasing use of reflective thinking. Whereas Moshman's (1979) study suggested that what he labelled 'metatheoretical thought', or the ability to think about one's own theories and processes of theorising, also develops subsequent to formal operational thought. All of these studies can be linked to a point that Piaget made in some of his later writings which can be taken as a

hypothesis that other forms of thought will emerge from formal operational thinking, namely, that what constitutes the form of thought at one stage of development becomes the content of thought during the next progressive adaptation (Piaget, 1970).

The most interesting and well developed theory of adult cognitive development was first proposed by Klaus Riegel in 1973 and was subsequently developed by him throughout most of the 1970s (Riegel, 1979). Riegel proposed a model of adult thinking based on the system of dialectic logic. In so doing, he was not denying that some adult thinking can be characterised by the formal logic model. However, according to Riegel, dialectic logic is much more characteristic of effective adult thinking; and therefore it provides a better model of the adult's potential for development than does formal logic which is more appropriately related to the adolescent's potential for development. The previously mentioned studies by Arlin, Neugarten and Moshman can be linked to one or another aspect of dialectic operational thought; therefore, they offer an indirect source of support for this very important theory.

Dialectic operations can be best explained by comparing and contrasting the processes involved in this type of thinking with those involved in formal operational thought.

The theory of dialectic logic or dialectic operational thought depicts a type of thinking which results in the discovery of important questions and problems. This demands the abilities to tolerate contradictions and to use the tension between two or more contradictory explanations as a creative force which allows for the discovery of new questions and problems. Whereas formal operational thought involves the elimination of contradiction in order to solve problems or to answer questions. In the process of dialectic thinking, abstract thought, or ideas and concepts, are reunited with concrete reality and experience. And it is from this reunion that contradictions emerge and become the dynamic or motivational forces for dialectic thinking. In other words, not only are contradictions tolerated by the dialectic thinker but they also excite or energize the thinking process.

When we think according to the system of formal logic, we attempt to isolate the 'identity' of an object, i.e. it is this and not that. However when we think dialectically we can also recognize that objects are this and yet not this. A very simple example would be the identification of large or big. At a certain age a child can easily distinguish large objects from small ones. This process pertains to a stage in the development of formal logic. However in dialectical thought the context becomes important and one is able to recognize the relativity of classification schemes;

for instance, what is large or big within one context may not be large or big within another context.

This does not mean that answers or points of stability never result in the course of dialectic thinking, but when they do they are resting points, temporary resolutions rather than immutable structures or final causes. Riegel contends that the most effective adult thinking and the type of thinking which fosters developments in scientific thought and human relations is not that which provides the immediate answer but that which discovers the important question or poses an important problem. (Riegel, 1978). Of course the mature adult thinker would be capable of formal operational thought and this type of thinking is often useful and effective for certain types of problem solving activities. However dialectic thought is not only more important within the adult's life experience but is demanded more because of the complex nature of the vast majority of that experience. Whether or not an adult interacts with these complex experiences according to the model of dialectic thought is another matter. Riegel's theory predicts the potential for mature adult thought, and therefore it is not necessarily a description of how all or most adults think within the total context of their experiences.

There are several factors which may act as barriers to the development and use of dialectic thinking. Not the least of these is the tendency for our society to conceive of thinking within the framework of formal logic. These conceptions are reflected in the institutional structures and objectives of our educational system and are also mirrored in our popular notions of the intelligent or educated person. The educated person is normally envisioned as one who can solve problems or deliver answers not one who discovers problems and questions. It is my opinion, however, that there is a pull or force exerted when an adult becomes interactive with his/her life experiences that helps the person to transcend the traditional forms of thinking. Some people may experience this development fairly early in adulthood but others, due to the nature of their interactions with adult life experience, may not undergo further development until quite late in life. And, unfortunately, some may never experience it given the present barriers imposed by our societal notions of thinking and education. There are other barriers as well, some of which we shall touch upon in our discussion of learning styles.

The research and theory mentioned to this point deal directly with cognitive or thinking development. There is one more piece of very recent research in this context with which I would like to deal before discussing two other areas of adult developmental research which have added indirect support to Riegel's theory of

of dialectic operations. Moshman, Neugarten, Arlin, and Riegel have addressed the question of the nature of adult thinking potential, that is, the structures and related processes which characterise effective or mature adult thought and which distinguish it from the thought of the mature adolescent. Labouvie-Vief (1980) has focussed her attention on the process of development during the adult years and has suggested a fundamentally different model of that process than the one we had assumed on the basis of Piaget's theory of child and adolescent development.

According to Piaget's theory, development proceeds in a stage sequence which is hierarchial in nature. Each stage is structurally more advanced than the proceeding one and the sequence is universal and invariant: everyone should pass through the same stages in the same order, though not necessarily at the same age. Stage theories of development have led to a 'last in-first out' model of development in adulthood because psychologists assumed that, when and if cognitive decline occurred in old age, it would do so in an order which was the reverse of the order of acquisition. A variety of research into the effects of age on cognitive functions supported this model in the past. However, Labouvie-Vief pointed out that one of the problems with that research was that psychologists were using tests or instruments derived from child and adolescent psychology; therefore the abilities under review were those we expected in the course of adolescent maturation. For example, in the vast majority of research into memory the type of memory being tested was memory for detail. Labouvie-Vief and colleagues devised alternative instruments designed to reveal higher order memory abilities, such as, memory for concepts, gist and principles. When tested with these instruments older adults performed as well as and sometimes even outperformed their younger counterparts. As a consequence, Labouvie-Vief has suggested a 'first in-first out' or 'trade-off' model of the developmental process. This means that as we develop during the adult years we may have to shed or trade off abilities acquired at an earlier age in order to acquire abilities which are more advanced or more relevant to the demands of adult life experience. Whether or not we truly jettison the early abilities or simply fail to display them because of preference for others or because they are used so infrequently remains a question. However this developmental process model fits nicely with, and reaffirms, the ideas about the potential for progressive adaptations in the quality of adult thinking which we discussed earlier.

Research into adult moral development and the adult learner's relationship to his/her learning has also borne witness to the

Self-Help Learning

development of qualitatively different ways of thinking during the adult years. And in both cases the apex of maturity would appear to involve dialectical rather than formal reasoning.

In the study of moral development, Kohlberg's theory, (Kohlberg, 1976) which was derived from Piaget's theory of cognitive development, has figured most prominently. This is a stage theory in which the highest stages of moral reasoning require formal logic as a necessary though not sufficient condition. Researching within the Kohlberg tradition, Gilligan and Murphy (1979) have discovered a qualitative transformation in adults' moral reasoning. Their research differed from previous studies because they had the advantage of studying a group over a period of seven years. Their subjects had responded to Kohlberg-type moral dilemmas or problems in a study which was conducted whilst the subjects were college students. Every member of the group which was studied by Gilligan and Murphy had been assessed as reasoning at a post-conventional or highly principled stage of moral reasoning during the initial study. After seven years and numerous adult life experiences, Gilligan and Murphy asked their subjects to look at their original responses to the problems and to say what they thought about them. The responses after the seven year period reflected a developmental evolution from the perfection of formal logic as a basis for moral reasoning through to the placement of this reasoning 'within the broader context of a more differentiated and dialectical understanding' of the problem (p. 91).

Our data is compatible with the interpretation that this discovery (ie. of the consequences of moral reasoning through logical justification) requires a cognitive transformation from a formal to a dialectical model of reasoning that can encompass the contradictions out of which moral problems themselves arise. While formal logic and principles of justice can release adolescent judgement from the binding constraints of a conventional mode of moral reasoning, the choices that arise in adulthood impose a new context for moral decisions that changes the dimensions of the problem These transformations arise out of the recognition of the paradoxical interdependence of self and society which overrides the false simplicity of formal reason and replaces it with a more encompassing form of judgement. (Gilligan and Murphy, p. 97)

In other words, the adolescent may be able to formulate a logically reasoned or highly principled response to a problem by focussing

on a single context or concept such as truth or justice. However, the mature adult will also have to consider the consequences of applying the principle which will introduce other contexts for consideration, such as the rights of others. Mature moral reasoning, therefore, is characterised by multiple contexts and, as a consequence, can encompass or deal with the contradictions which produce the moral problem.

Gilligan and Murphy's approach to their research was influenced by Perry's (1970) research into the relationship between a learner and his or her learning. In his extended study of Harvard undergraduates, Perry had found that this relationship developed through a nine stage sequence which can be simplified into three categories or ways of relating to knowledge. In the early stages of university or higher education, learners adopt an absolutistic or dualistic stance which is reflected in their belief that 'the truth' exists and can be found; therefore there are answers which are right and those which are wrong. Later the learner recognizes that knowledge and authoritative explanations of phenomena are relative and contextually dependent. Ultimately, however, whilst the learner's thought remains within the context of relativism, it is reunited with affectivity, and commitment to particular explanations develops. This last category which includes stages 7, 8 and 9 in Perry's scheme would appear to entail dialectical reasoning and therefore a qualitative transformation of thought (together with a qualitative change in the learner's relationship to learning) can potentially develop during early adulthood. Whether or not dialectical thought and its related modes of learning are displayed in adults will depend to a considerable extent on the learning context, including the approach or educational learning style as well as the educator's educational philosophy and consequent objectives.

Before turning to the educational implications which we can derive from this research and theory, I would like to summarise by proposing a concept or model of the adult's developmental potential. Paulo Freire (1972) talks about the human vocation or the humanising process as being one of movement from being 'adapted' or controlled by knowledge or myths to being 'integrated' or conscientised and therefore in control of one's own knowledge and thought. He goes on to say that control is achieved through critical reflection and action. It seems to me that all of the research so far discussed has to do with adults' potential to acquire greater control over their thinking, action and feeling. It is thought in interaction with experience which leads to this control. For example, adolescent reflection is abstract and alienated from experience; less so, of course, as

adolescence proceeds. Therefore, it may well be that reflection in adulthood is not just increasing, as Neugarten (1977) suggests, but is qualitatively transformed by the reunion of thought and experience. Mature reflection and reasoning encompass multiple contexts and, as a consequence, contradictions, and, if Riegel is correct, this dialectical complexity energizes and excites creative and effective adult thought. The direction of our developmental potential, during the adult years, therefore, is one of increasing control and self-direction of our thinking, our feeling and our actions.

(B) The Educational Implications: the Andragogic Approach

The educational implications which can be derived from the emerging theory of adult developmental potential are profoundly important and this is especially true if we consider the present campaign for the rights of older people to education. Most ardent campaigners, be they young, middle-aged or old, have assumed that education during the later years is important for keeping an already developed mind active. An active mind is less likely to suffer the perils of age even in cases where physical impairment is present. Of course others argue for the older person's educational rights because of social factors such as missed opportunities at a younger age. Nevertheless, most if not all campaigners are centrally concerned with the benefits that can be derived from mental activity. However, if this were the only purpose or objective, it would seem to me to make little difference to a motivated learner which educational approach or learning style is employed. If we are simply aiming to maintain a status quo level of development, all we need to do is to place academic content and opportunity in the older person's way, and if motivated he/she will remain mentally active. On the other hand, if we reconceptualise the purpose of learning during the later years as having to do with the fulfillment of one's developmental potential, then, in my opinion, we have seriously to reconsider not only our approach to education but also our concepts of education.

The art and science of teaching is called pedagogy. All forms of pedagogical practice derive from a common concept of education. According to this conception, the primary objective of education is to acquire knowledge, ideas and skills. In the remainder of this chapter, I will propose an alternative approach to education which derives from the theory and research I have discussed. This approach is called andragogy or the art and science of adult learning. One of the most fundamental differences between pedagogy and andragogy has to do with the primary

objectives. Andragogy assumes that learning is synonymous with thinking rather than acquiring knowledge, ideas and skills. Therefore the primary objective of an andragogic approach is to develop progressively more complex ways of thinking. Thinking about knowledge, ideas and skills places the primary objectives of pedagogy in a subservient position to thought - they are the tools of thought and as such new knowledge, ideas and skills can be created.

During the history of adult education certain styles of learning or particular modes of practice have evolved which hold a great deal in common with andragogy. The Swedish study circle and other forms of self-help learning are good examples. However, as most proponents of these learning styles will readily admit, the actual practice frequently falls short of the ideal or philosophical objective. Briefly stated, the ideal is for a group of adults to exercise control over their own learning. What frequently happens is that the void created by the absence of the teacher or authority figure is filled by an influential group member who then unwittingly creates similar learning/thinking conditions to those which exist in traditional settings. It was this problem which led a group of adult education colleagues and myself to spend considerable time and thinking effort in the systematic formulation of an approach which recognizes the complexity involved in creating the conditions for realising the commendable aims of the self-help learning style. (NAG, 1983)

Our 'developmental theory of andragogy' has been influenced to a considerable degree by our study and dialogue about the adults' developmental potential and the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire. The model of the adult's thinking potential depicts a person in control of their thinking rather than one controlled by the thinking of others. And Freire's philosophy depicts a process of education or learning which is one of liberation through a denunciation of structures which are dehumanising and an announcing of a humanising structure. Dehumanising structures oppress people in either subtle or direct ways depending upon the historical and cultural context in which they exist: whereas humanising structures are created by people's praxis or that intergration of thought and action, aimed at, first, the recognition and, then, the elimination of factors which oppress people. These are the factors which prevent people from the type of control over their thought and action which allows them to realise the full potential of being human. Freire's critique of traditional education is that it is designed to domesticate or socialise people into their culture or society. He calls this a 'banking' concept of education because the teacher's role is to deposit knowledge in the

minds of the learner. Many British educators, whilst admiring Freire's ideas when applied to the Third World context in which they evolved, have seen them as holding little relevance for our own context. However, if Gramsci's concept of hegemony is considered alongside Freire's ideas, then the relevance of Freire to all aspects of adult learning becomes increasingly apparent.

Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony explains how societies or cultures develop their own notions of what is 'common sense'. Common sense or hegemony is a vast range of notions which have to do with preserving and guaranteeing the position in society of those who hold the real power. Hegemony is not opposed by those who derive no benefit from it, because even the oppressed accept hegemonic notions as reality or common sense. In emerging nations, or those in a state of upheaval, hegemony is maintained through the military apparatus of the state. Therefore it is more visible or less subtle than it is in mature nation-states, where it is maintained through the apparatus of civil society, such as the media and education.

The practice of pedagogy with adult learners is one example of the subtle influence of 'hegemony' in our society. But because it is subtle it is therefore more complicated to decode than it may have been for Freire and others who were combating much more obvious manifestations of oppression. This is why we would contend that the process of adults coming to control their own thinking and learning will never take place through intent alone. Intent must work in combination with the creation of alternative structures and conditions for learning. Creating alternatives depends primarily on changing the relationship of teacher and learner and the relationship of learners and teachers with knowledge. Freire's ideas inform us as to how we might go about creating both of these changes and this is why they have had such a profound influence on our theory of andragogy.

An andragogic approach to adult learning recognizes that by virtue of being adults both teachers and learners have the potential for further development. Therefore learning is a process wherein adults come together to think, to question and reflect on what they know or on new areas of content, that is, what others think they know, and then to test this against and within experience. In pedagogical approaches to adult learning, be they traditional or progressive, the teacher is always controlling the learning process because he or she determines what the learners should know or discover. In pedagogy, knowledge or authoritative explanation is something the learner needs to acquire. In andragogy, knowledge and authoritative explanation are used in the collective exploration and thinking about a particular problem or question. The problems

or questions arise out of the concerns and concrete experiences of the group. Therefore theory and research, within andragogy, is constantly grounded in reality.

Teachers or leaders have only one role in an andragogic learning group that differs from anyone else's role. It is their responsibility to take the initial lead in establishing what we have called a 'peer learning group'. This is neither a simple or automatic process because most of us have only had previous experience of learning pedagogically. Therefore considerable time and effort is needed to decode these experiences and to become conscious of how they serve to impede the development of our full human potential.

With pedagogical approaches there is considerable evidence that learners learn as much if not more from the hidden curriculum than the one encoded in the syllabus. First and foremost, they learn, and then accept or rebel against, the notion that they are incapable of deciding what to learn and how to go about learning it. The andragogical approach makes explicit an alternative notion, viz., that adults are capable of deciding and should decide what to learn and how to learn. Therefore they should be in control of all aspects of their educational experience. Furthermore, they are more likely to realise control over their thinking and their learning if they are involved in each and every aspect of the educational decision making process.

We often dichotomise the educational experience in terms of process versus content. For example, traditional pedagogy is primarily concerned with content and progressive pedagogy with process. Nevertheless, each aims to enable the learner to reach the objectives which the teacher has set. In an andragogic approach to adult learning, process and content are equally important. Not only does the peer learning group share the decision making process with regard to the content and method of learning, but they also share the responsibility for managing the group processes. In andragogy, therefore, the focus is on two types of process: the learning process or method and also the group process or the group dynamics. Negotiation and continuous evaluation or reflection on what is taking place, both in terms of learning or thinking and in terms of relating one to another, are continuous features of andragogic learning.

According to our theory of andragogy, the learning process is primarily a group rather than an individual one. Though it is obviously very complicated for a group to take control over its thinking and learning in this way, it can be argued that the type of development andragogy is aimed at can only be realised through collective effort. In our study of adult development we began to

Self-Help Learning

question whether the kind of thinking which has led to great advances in science, philosophy or the arts, has ever occurred through solely isolated or individual problem exploration. Those to whom we attribute these advances, such as Freud, Marx or Einstein, share an advantage that most of us do not. Because they were known to be the 'thinkers' of their time, they shared a characteristic life style in which serious intellectual dialogue with others was a constant and common feature. When the human mind attempts to wrestle with complex problems, the tendency is to eliminate contradictions and to foreclose on a solution prematurely. Thinking through problems collectively can aid in forestalling such premature closure, but this only happens when the conditions are created which serve to promote this objective.

While the andragogic approach is centred around problem posing, this can itself also be thought of as a skill which is an integral and essential feature within the process of collective thinking. Within an andragogic approach, collective thinking is referred to as dialogue. The skill of problem posing can only be realised within the framework of dialogue. Our concept of dialogue is a synthesis derived from everything that Freire has said about dialogue. To our knowledge, there is no one place in Freire's writings where he describes or explains dialogue in full. Therefore we have attempted to draw together the various points that he makes about the process in order to devise a methodology which enables the development and application of dialectic thought.

In order for a group of people to engage in dialogue, they must all understand that it is not simply a discussion but a method designed to enable the development of their most effective thinking. It is also necessary for the group members initially to value, and later to reflect through their actions, certain fundamental assumptions. Dialogue requires people to be engaged in the process of questioning their existing knowledge. It also requires them to have a genuine desire to share group member's meanings, ideas and feelings. Therefore dialogue presupposes attitudes such as mutual respect and trust of each member for every other member, so that genuine equality exists within the group experience. Needless to say this does not transpire fully until openness, trust, care and commitment have developed within the collective interpersonal relationships of the group.

Problem posing is a form of communication that is used within dialogue and which is enabled by dialogue. It differs considerably from our normal or everyday style of communicating. In our normal discussions with people we tend to communicate in a monological as opposed to a dialogical manner. For example, person A makes a statement and person B responds with a

statement. Sometimes the two statements are related and sometimes not but whether or not related each is an attempt to convey personal meaning, explanation or opinion. Dialogic communication or problem posing requires others to investigate the meanings, ideas and feelings inherent in each statement that is communicated, whether it be a statement originating from within the group or one which the group is considering. Therefore, group members forestall their own immediate responses and work collectively to question or pose problems which arise out of the communicated statement. When a group works collectively to explore each other's thinking, it helps individuals to question or reflect upon what they know or think they know. Thus the tendency to 'tell' and, therefore, to oppress or forestall the collective analysis of the problem is reduced. Since dialogic communication is not our normal mode of communicating, it takes a great deal of practice and continuous evaluation in order to both improve and sustain its development. It is also essential that all group members share the responsibility for dialogue and thus share in the problem posing process. If only one or even a few members take on this responsibility, their thinking will begin to manipulate or dominate the dialogue, because they will not have the advantage of the group supporting and helping to sustain their own critical reflection upon what they think they know.

One further point about dialogue is that it must be grounded in praxis or the inseparable unity of reflection and action. Thought in separation from action is also liable to premature closure. It is only when thought is reunited with action or ongoing experience that it is continually being refined and developed. According to Freire and according to our own experience of learning andragogically, these are the conditions necessary to the creation of knowledge which we deem to be synonymous with the development of dialectic thought.

I stated earlier that learning experiences during the later years of life had a potential to do more for an older person than simply providing mental activity and a maintenance of one's status quo level of development. I have been arguing that self-help group learning within an andragogic framework affords the opportunity for further development and therefore the opportunity for individuals to realize their full developmental potential. But I also think there is another opportunity which this style of learning can offer which may be of equal if not greater importance. The following quote may help to explain this other opportunity.

As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with what they produce and how

they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions which determine their production. (Karl Marx, with the collaboration of Frederick Engels) The German Ideology 1846.

Since those words were written, the material conditions of our society have changed. By and large the material conditions in our society, have improved. What human beings produce, or that which they labour to create, takes a variety of forms including services and knowledge. But the basic tenets, set out by Marx and Engels in 1846, are still true despite these changes, because those tenets pertain not only to what is produced, but to the relationships which exist in the production process and between the person and what he or she produces. In an educational or learning context, the nature of human beings will coincide with the quality of the knowledge they produce and both the nature of the human being and the knowledge created will coincide with how it is produced; in other words, the relationships between people in the production of knowledge and between people and knowledge.

An older person in our society today, due to the nature of the socio-economic organisation of our society, is virtually stripped of the status and roles which he or she spent the adult years acquiring. This is because status and roles are primarily determined by one's position within the economic structure. Since our structure cannot accommodate the concept of full employment we have, as a necessity of our system, a surplus labour force and a retired labour force. Both of these share many of the same anomalies of this system. When one finds oneself outside the labour force, one finds that labour, whether mental or manual, is about filling time or keeping active rather than being attached to a value of any social or economic significance.

If, through encouraging learning in the later years, we see the added opportunity for reallocating some value to people's mental labour thereby affecting the quality and meaning of their lives, then we can argue that the way in which learning or thinking is organised is extremely important. The organisation of those learning experiences must allow the individual to regain control over what is produced or created. It follows that not just any learning experience will achieve all that can be achieved through promoting learning in the later years. Our experiences which deal with the fundamental relationships involved in knowledge production will succeed in returning some degree and type of value to the older person's life. In learning or educational

Self-Help Learning

contexts, we can only realise the full promise of the experience if we challenge the accepted relationships of teacher and taught and relationship of both of these to knowledge. This is the challenge implicit in the self-help concept of learning; however I have tried to argue that to make the challenge felt as an explicit reality of the learning experience is a complex process. I can only hope that by drawing the reader's attention to the complexity entailed in realising the complete aims of self-help learning that I have not discouraged people from attempting the approach. It is only through attempting, reflecting and attempting yet again that we will begin to work through the complex problems of learning for development and learning for value whether in the later years or during the entirety of adult life.

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Chapter 6

MAJOR INFLUENCES ON U3A DEVELOPMENT

JOHN RENNIE AND MICHAEL YOUNG

Like no man, no idea is an island. It draws inspiration from other streams of thought and action, and this is undoubtedly true of the U3A notion. Two influences, in particular, have been paramount. One is community education. As John Rennie explains, this creed eschews 'the expert-client approach for a collaborative, self-monitoring and ultimately autonomous one', which, in turn, is as clear a definition of the U3A mutuality approach as one could wish. His preference for a 'concentration on needs identified by the people themselves rather than the purveying of a pre-determined set of ideas or materials' is, plainly, the social equivalent of Paula Allman's andragogic approach. The other influence is the self-help movement, so firmly identified in Great Britain with Michael Young, who draws the parallels between the mutual side of U3A groups and that of a colourful collection of self-help initiatives from garages and bulk-buying to health and re-cycling. This illuminates the vital spark of U3A self-mobilisation, and, importantly, Michael Young points to the complementary rather than the alternative character of self-help: 'welfare state and welfare self-help will flourish together, in partnership'.

John Rennie is Director of the Community Education Development Centre based on Coventry, where, as Community Education Adviser, he was chiefly responsible for that city taking so impressive a lead in this field. He led the School Council's influential Social Education Project and is the author, among other material, of Social Education : An Experiment in Four Secondary Schools. Under his dynamic leadership, CEDC has become the vital focus for the expansion of Community Education in Britain.

Founder of the Consumers' Association, and of the Advisory Centre for Education, originator of the Open University, first chairman of the National Consumer Council, president of the National Extension College Michael Young's record as a social revisionist is without recent parallel. He was a member of the Plowden Committee and, among other works, author of the celebrated The Rise of the Meritocracy. As chairman of both the Mutual Aid Centre and the University of the Third Age National Committee, it is appropriate that it is his coinage which provides the title of this book.

(A) The Community Education Movement

John Rennie

If anything is designed to send shivers down the backs of politicians and decision-makers, it is the production of statistics showing large groups of people in some kind of need. Over the last thirty years, without ever becoming used to it, successive governments have had to deal with increasingly strident demands for fresh resources to deal with the newly-awakened aspirations of some groups or the resigned pleadings of others. Somehow governments survive - despite the forebodings of financially-conscious ministers and the apocalyptic spectres created by the yellow press. In turn, it seems, teenagers, ethnic minority groups, pre-school children, women and the unemployed have smitten the national consciousness, if not the public conscience, and have been seen as pressure groups, worthy causes, intolerable burdens - depending on your political viewpoint.

Here we are again. In only a year or two, the elderly are suddenly 'an issue'. Like the teenagers of the late fifties and early sixties, they are all at once a new market force, a body of voters to be reckoned with, a focus for media attention. Though it is hardly surprising that their most clearly articulated needs have been economic, it has come as something of a shock to note their revived interest in education. Even more amazing has been the rapid recognition of their educational needs by professionals and others in the education service. If this recognition has not been matched by the provision of funds to meet those needs, nor the imagination to implement new methods of touching them, then this is no more than par for the course for the education service. Since those needs are not going to go away, it behoves that service to think again - both about funding and about how best to spend what funds it has.

It is my purpose to suggest that the most likely way forward is through community education. What follows is an analysis of these potential new learners in educational terms; how best to

Major Influences on U3A Development

meet their needs without falling back on the methods which have palpably failed in the past; and some suggestions as to who will be the providers and enablers of whatever new provision arises.

i. Who are the New Learners?

More than any other educational characteristic of the elderly the fact that they are very broadly unqualified is the most potent. Great advances in secondary, further and higher education after the second world war came too late for the age-group which is now either retired or coming up to it. Having gone through the traumas of that war and the hungry Thirties which preceded it, they missed out on the educational bonanza (relatively speaking) which followed it. It would be iniquitous if they were to miss out again.

The Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education has shown us that only 6% of the over 65's have taken any kind of course in the preceding three years, as opposed to over 42% of those aged 25 - 44. We know that only 2 or 3% of LEA adult education enrolments in 1981-82 were pensioners - despite the fee-reduction policies of a few enlightened authorities. A massive 80% of the over 65's have no educational qualifications at all. Whatever talk there is of the undoubted value of the 'school of hard knocks' and 'the university of life', this is a clear imbalance and speaks volumes of the under provision of resources faced by this age-group in earlier years.

To some extent, the 80% figure is a pointless statistic. After all, everybody knows that it is no reflection on the abilities of older people. But educators must not under-estimate the effect that older learners' own knowledge of their unqualified status has had on their confidence and self-esteem over the years. This is a theme to which we will return later.

A second major characteristic of this group is that they are, paradoxically, younger and fitter either than they have ever been before or than the rest of us now recognise. Better health care and ameliorated housing conditions have clearly helped in bringing this about but a later phenomenon has had an even greater effect. Early retirement is now much more widespread than ever could have been predicted even five years ago. Most local authorities and many companies now have schemes to enable people to retire at 55, or even earlier, on enhanced pensions and/or with lump sums to cushion the effect.

More than ever, therefore, do educators need to lose their ageist ideas about what kind of thing older learners need or would like. The anodyne and often patronising activities of the 'Darby and Joan' or the 'Silver Threads' clubs seem less and less likely to appeal to a generation attuned to packaged holidays on the

continent and all that they entail. Anyone who has been brushed aside by the crowds of pensioners massing at the Saga holidays point on Victoria Station or fought for a seat on British Rail during their November special offers for pensioners will appreciate the point.

Finally, there are simply more of them. From 1971, when there were twice as many youngsters in school than there were retired people, to 1981 when the numbers equalled out, there has been in Brian Groombridge's phrase, 'a demographic transformation' which will see, by the end of this decade, twice as many people in retirement as there will be pupils in schools - a neat about-turn in less than 20 years. Perhaps pressures in the polling booths by then will encourage politicians to make a parallel switch in the funding required to meet the educational needs of the two groups - and will the education service be ready for that - or even a watered-down version of it?

If we have to re-think our ideas about who the new breed of older learners are, we must also, obviously, think again about what we mean by education and recognise that courses, tutors and classes are but one manifestation of the learning process. Above all, we need to re-affirm the concept of recurrent education - the meeting of changing needs throughout life, rather than what Eric Midwinter has called the current 'apprentice-bound' education system.

ii. What is the Community Education Approach?

Community educators are a relatively new breed of people in the education service. Some would say they have their tutorial roots in the Mechanics' Institutes early in the century or, more likely still, the Village Colleges of Henry Morris's Cambridgeshire in the thirties. Their outreach roots are less tangible but might be traced through the early health visitors to the informal adult education approaches of the Education Priority Area movement in the late sixties and early seventies. At their current stage of evolution they are still most likely to be found in educational institutions, albeit of the more open kind, - in community primary schools, adult education centres and community colleges.

Increasingly though, they are found in other less formal community settings - taking education to the people rather than waiting for customers to come through the door. Largely trained as professionals, usually teachers, community educators pride themselves on their particular professional skills, different from either community workers or adult educators but owing something to both. They have open discussions with members of the community about educational needs rather than taking all the decisions themselves, - they start where people are 'at'.

Major Influences on U3A Development

They seek to meet those needs in new ways, breaking down old barriers, creatively using existing resources - human and environmental - rather than forever seeking new ones. They are concerned with the process of learning and not just the content of it - eschewing the expert-client approach for a collaborative, self-mobilising and ultimately autonomous one.

Much of it is about confidence-building. If we lay before the community an à la carte menu of educational dishes and they fail to water at the mouth, are we to bemoan their lack of good taste or, equally pointlessly, sack the cook and bring in a new one? Might we, instead, ask the customers to devise the menu, enlist their aid in the cooking and, not least, in the serving? Of course, not to carry the metaphor too far, we would meet the resistance of the community who would soon explain that they were not trained or qualified to do any of this. Confidence is noticeably lacking, in educational terms, in the vast majority of potential participants, particularly in the older age range, who for so long have been denied the opportunity to join in.

Confidence does not come, of course, merely from the availability of a new 'product'. It has to be painstakingly built by skilled workers using the tools of sensitivity, listening skills and respect rather than the traditional pedagogic skills of knowledge transmission. It is often a slow process; it has setbacks and disappointments and needs stamina and perseverance as much as imagination and creativity. Without it, though, we might as well confine ourselves to laying on a ready-made programme on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, and cease concerning ourselves with the failures such approaches have had in reaching the bulk of the population.

Some of the work done in community education 'outreach' activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas, and perhaps above all with the frequently isolated and economically-depressed younger women who tend to be the solitary adult in one-parent families, has shown the way forward. A recently completed project supported by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, and using the community education services of Coventry, Liverpool, Birmingham and the West Isles of Scotland, is a good example. This Open University project aimed to use enlightened and clearly-written materials about child-rearing practices which would be accessible to groups not traditionally familiar with OU programmes; essentially, the workers in these very disparate locations had to devise new methods of reaching out to such groups. Significantly, the relative-recently devised methods of local community educators seemed to prove the most effective means of bringing groups together.

Major Influences on U3A Development

Such methods included slotting this project into the contexts of outgoing community education groups where professionals had already established relationships with local residents, or knew how to go about it. Seeking to reach the most disadvantaged people in difficult rural terrain on the one hand, and somewhat notorious urban neighbourhoods on the other, they gradually raised the confidence of large numbers of participants. This was despite their finding all too frequently an almost numbing apathy, bordering on total withdrawal from community life in the more extreme cases.

One colleague describes her work in the early stages of reaching such groups as double-digging - the careful preparation of the ground before attempting to plant new seeds. She means by this the whole range of community education outreach methods - knocking on doors to talk face-to-face with people; the gradual building of groups of two or three in homes before ever attempting to integrate people into larger groups; concentration on needs identified by the people themselves rather than the purveying of a pre-determined set of ideas or materials. All of this, of course, needs to be carried out with non-judgemental attitudes to the value - systems of others and a preparedness to become involved in the issues facing the residents in their own communities.

Sheila Karran, who was the community education worker in Coventry for the Open University project, learned these skills in her previous position as an Education Visitor in the city - itself a position which was first created in an earlier community education experiment, the Educational Priority Area Project. Since then, Sheila Karran has continued the development of these ideas in her current work as a home-school organiser for the city's Community Education Project. Sheila Karran's concentration is invariably on the development of peer-group support based on the certain knowledge that ordinary people can be encouraged to support each other in the group situation and that the role of the sensitive professional is that of an enabler and facilitator - breaking away from paternalism and striving for a collaborative and collegial relationship. In no way is this an abdication of professionalism. On the contrary, it requires a more enlightened, more demanding and ultimately enhanced role for the professional.

In 1978, Flo Robinson, an ex-head of an infants' school who was by then a community education worker in a disadvantaged area of the north of Coventry, was determined to involve a group of mothers in the teaching of reading to their children. Almost to her own surprise, she found herself up to her neck in discussions about unpaid gas bills, marital problems, rent arrears, welfare

Major Influences on U3A Development

benefits, condensation problems and a whole series of other issues which to 'her mums' seemed even more pressing than the achievements of their youngsters in the classroom. So was the concept of 'double-digging' born in Flo Robinson's mind - not as an intellectual, theoretical concept but as a glaring practical demand born of necessity. Her later success in achieving her more limited original aims on the reading front could, she believes, be attributed at least as much to the mutual support those women gained in sharing feelings and insights about other issues as to their more structured discussions about reading schemes and the like. Certainly, observers reported great difficulty in discerning the main purpose of these group meetings yet all commented glowingly on the relaxed and informal atmosphere and the obvious value of the group to the women concerned.

Another project, originated by the Community Education Development Centre in Hounslow and Coventry owes much to the pioneering work of the Education Visitors mentioned earlier. Called H. E. L. P. - Home-based Early Learning Project - it borrows unashamedly from the commercial world of party-plan selling to take education into the homes of people in several neighbourhoods. Just as Education Visitors brought parents together to discuss the wider issues of education as well as their own child's progress in school, the HELP workers organise informal get-togethers in the homes of residents. Here they are led by local people, 'trained' beforehand by professionals and carrying a stock of some low-cost materials, games, but above all, educational ideas. Their successes have exploded many educational myths, but, most importantly, they have highlighted a new and valuable method of outreach work, easily replicated and costing little.

iii. Who Might Do This Kind of Work?

If most of the strategies described here have been aimed at people with young families, can any of them be translated into effective tools for working with older learners? There seems to be an overwhelming argument that they can.

Paradoxically, the fact that more than one quarter of retired people live alone, and the even more chilling statistic that one fifth of them are in receipt of supplementary benefit, provide part of the proof. First, retired people living alone are clearly in need of the kind of contact which some of these strategies have so clearly provided to other, equally isolated people. Arguably, old people alone are even more vulnerable than the lone mother of a young child who at least has her raison d'être tugging at her skirt to remind her all too palpably of her role. Second, sheer

economic necessity prevents all too many older people from taking advantage of the too-few learning opportunities which are presented to them. Even the LEA fees are prohibitive in some areas of the country.

An even more telling argument is the much more positive one that this age-group of people seems more than any other, except the very young, to be ready to join a group. Of all the myths about older people, the most cruel, yet most easily disproved, is the one which says that they prefer to be alone. Almost all groups which begin with a view to attracting this age-group seem to prosper. Indeed the surprising thing is how ready older people are to join groups which offer little more than the mere opportunity to mix with others. It is as if the whole community education approach has been designed with this age-group in mind.

If any of these strategies for work with older people are to work, conventional attitudes are going to have to change. It simply will not do to expect the retired to sit quietly looking at their retirement clock until it is too late to experience again the joy of learning. We must now look at the positive side of retirement - recognising that here are the wisest and most experienced people in society. Then we can reasonably ask them what new contribution they intend to make to the community, for surely the community cannot afford to lose their skills. Once this new psychology takes hold, we have the right climate to enable people to learn, to lead, to take control of their own lives.

Fortunately, there are already some startling examples of success which are capable of replication elsewhere. Vera Southgate, in Stoke-on-Trent, working for the Beth Johnson Foundation, found it almost impossible to persuade the local leisure committee that the elderly should have their own special time in the council's swimming pools. When she was finally granted an hour, it was at the inauspicious time of eight o'clock on Friday evenings. To everyone's astonishment, a minimum of publicity produced a massive response from older people. Really, the only surprise is that we are surprised.

Birmingham's FIRCON scheme - Friends in Retirement - is a fine example of the community education notion of using the most readily able resource in the community - other people, to provide a wide range of study opportunities for others. Groups are led by facilitators who are usually retired themselves.

The Community Education Development Centre's 'Senior Action' project in Stoke-on-Trent and Northampton aims to find opportunities for retired people to make a new contribution to their communities using whatever skills they have learned from their previous jobs or gained in other ways during their lives. Like any

Major Influences on U3A Development

scheme which genuinely seeks to involve people, it is run by retired people themselves - the first set of skills required is the ability to run the project.

iv. Who Can Carry It Out?

Eric Midwinter has argued for a 'barefoot teacher' approach towards working with older learners - a home-visiting tutor, perhaps a paraprofessional - visiting homes on a weekly basis. All community educators will recognise the style. And there can be little doubt that this precisely matches the unorthodox out-reaching methods described earlier. It is, of course, only one approach and since many are going to be needed, it may be useful to look at the 'breeds' of people required.

Clearly, no government in the foreseeable future is likely to sanction the creation of a new breed of professionals to facilitate the learning structures of older students. It may also be true that this would not be the best solution in any case. Much more likely, and perhaps more desirable, is the recruitment of new cadres of volunteers - along the lines of FIRCONe and Senior Action - who will adopt the community education approach and become enablers in their own right, rather than surrogate professionals providing a watered-down tutorial service.

If this were to be done on any ambitious scale - indeed if it were to be done at all - it would need professional support. Volunteers need training, initial and in-service, so to speak, and ongoing support in the field. They need the kind of informed backing offered to residents in the HELP scheme, or that provided by Sheila Karran to her mothers' groups. It needs, then, a re-cycling of existing professionals to act in this way and to spread their influence widely through training the trainers for group work.

Whenever this kind of networking operation is mounted, there sooner or later arises the need for paraprofessionals - and these may be nearer to the 'barefoot teachers' Eric Midwinter had in mind. They are likely to be the more successful of the volunteers since volunteering invariably throws up those with real talent in any particular field. They will be the most assiduous trainers, the best empathisers, the most effective communicators. More likely than not, they will work part-time and they will provide not only a cost-effective force but one less likely to be concerned with its own vested interests.

None of this can be done for nothing. For too long, community educators have managed the 'bricks-without-straw' departments of local authorities. Cost-effective does not mean cost-free. Re-cycled professionals will be capable of training the volunteers and the paraprofessionals who will be the cadre-leaders, But

all the work generated will need financial support for payment of paraprofessionals, for expenses of volunteers, for materials and equipment to carry out the work. Nevertheless, the greatest need will remain the changed attitude by local authorities to provide the professional scheme leaders and by those professionals who will be required to exchange their former roles for the new one of trainer of the trainers, network organiser, innovator, motivator and inter-professional linkman.

Where can it all take place? In the best spirit of community education, the community's own resources will be used. So the pubs and clubs will be as likely as the schools and colleges to house the groups of learners. Tutors will venture into homes - HELP-style - on an informal group-work basis and on only a one-to-one basis where people are incapacitated. Others will operate with groups where people are in residential care - and even in this precedents already exist. In other words, wherever people with needs are, there will the tutors need to go.

It seems strange that the process of education is so bound up in our minds with schools. Odder still that we continue to accept the Victorian notion that schooling is for the young in society - all very well given the Victorians' narrow concept of education but ludicrous given today's broadly accepted notion of lifelong learning. But such a notion becomes an empty promise if it is not applied to people who may not uncommonly spend nearly as long in retirement as they have done in their working lives.

In arguments about unemployment and the costs of factory closures, for example, it has become fashionable to think of a 'social audit' - taking account of the social costs of closure as well as the immediate removal of the factory-owners' losses. Perhaps it is timely, therefore, to take a social audit of the concept of retirement and of not making available the community education resources to make a contribution to the education of the third age. We may then take an Elizabethan decision to abandon yet another (and provenly dangerous) invention of the Victorians, - retirement - and replace it with a new 'Third Age Learning Stage'. Community educators have the tools all ready to make it happen.

(B) The Mutual Aid/Self-Help Movement

Michael Young

Self-help and mutual aid are flourishing not because of the present government but despite it. Since 1979 there has been a sad running down of the welfare state which was built up so painstakingly in the previous half century. There have been cuts and half-cuts and the threats of cuts, and perhaps just as significant as that in its effects has been the deliberate spreading of discouragement. To judge by the way some ministers have talked, and are talking, there is something almost reprehensible about being in the public service at all (except for the forces and the police). In the past, it was considered a sign of civilisation that people could work in jobs where they were not motivated by profit but by concern to perform a public service not driven by commercial dictates. The people whose mission seems to be to undermine morale amongst the millions engaged in education, health, social services and public housing have undoubtedly had some success. All their talk about the paramount need (as they see it) to reduce public spending has been enfeebling. Millions of the best, most useful and most public spirited people in the country are threatened with the status of drone, of being a 'burden' on the rest of us, when the fact is that without them the rest of us would be in real poverty, material and spiritual. Dismantle morale in the public services and where would the rest of us be?

As if to add insult to injury, these same ministers are inclined to give self-help a bad name as well, by suggesting it as an alternative to the public services - cut down, they say, on the one and compensate by a growth of the other. This is only mischief. Self-help can never be a substitute for collective organisation, informal mutual aid a substitute for formal mutual aid through the means of the welfare state. The U3A could never, and should never, take the place of ordinary universities or adult education; self-help groups like the Spastics Society or the Schizophrenia Fellowship never take the place of the NHS; housing associations take the place of local authorities. The formal social services need the support of informal, led by the family itself; likewise the informal or voluntary self-help movements need the backing of the welfare state. It is no use just sharing out time, care and money within the little domain of Puddlecombe or Perth. There needs also to be a grand sharing between all the citizens of the nation if their individual rights are to be respected wherever they live and whatever they do. There needs also to be a willingness to back self-help groups with public funds wherever they are essential to support an initiative which would otherwise wither.

The best hope is that, once this present period of penny-

pinching is over, welfare state and welfare self-help will flourish together, in partnership. There are many good examples already to point the way forward, like housing associations which combine state funds and voluntary effort, or local enterprise trusts like the one at St Helens or the many voluntary bodies which look after handicapped children. Many of the most flourishing mutual aid groups are supported by public funds. Long may it be so. That is one way forward for the welfare state which has added something of crucial value to the original Beveridge conception. But the promise will be blighted unless the main structure in education, health, social services and the rest is kept in being and, more than that, nourished.

I think that needs to be said in order to dissociate myself from any misguided person who sees the U3A or any other self-help body as something which is going to do the government's work. But that having been said, I can now without compunction declare my belief in the value of self-help as a supplement to the welfare state. Perhaps I can best make my point by an illustration drawn from my own experience.

Marianne Rigge and I had worked at the National Consumer Council for some years when we decided that the 'consumer movement' needed a mutual aid wing to it. The path had been beaten for us by Eric Midwinter who had promoted bulk buy groups as a modern form of the original consumer co-operative, more like the Rochdale Equitable Society than the Co-operative Wholesale Society. But more remained to be done and some of it could perhaps be fostered by the Mutual Aid Centre which we founded.

No new initiative that I've heard of has gone smoothly and the Mutual Aid Centre has been no exception. We have had our crop of mistakes and failures, like the attempt we made to save the London Co-operative Society by supporting reform candidates for the last democratic election held before the LCS was taken over by the national body, Co-operative Retail Services. We were probably twenty years too late and our manifesto, Mutual Aid in a Selfish Society, addressed to our fellow-members of the London Society, did not bring out many votes. In general, apathy reigned. Arteries had hardened.

So we turned instead to the small and the new, while still aiming to do what the co-operative societies had done at their best, that is become self-supporting through providing a service that members wanted and were prepared to pay for as well as work for. I had many years before, when I started Which? magazine, seen the Consumers' Association in that light, as a self-help body which was in the nature of an information co-

Major Influences on U3A Development

operative. Members paid their subscriptions for an information service which they all benefited from and increasingly, also, they shared information direct by telling each other through the medium of the Association what their own experience had been with their various makes of car, washing machines or General Practitioners. The same idea should be capable of translation to other fields.

The first big effort went into a motorists' co-operative. We learnt a lot from Sweden. It has 800 service stations specialising in DIY, with bays specially equipped for the poorer motorist who does his or her own servicing and repair and with expert advice on tap to support the members who help each other. Our first station took a long time to negotiate because we had no capital and had to stitch together some £ $\frac{1}{4}$ million to pay for the building and equip it to a high standard. The site we chose was at Milton Keynes and the name of our place the same as in Sweden, OK, so that we are known there as MKOK.

The station sells to its members and outsiders petrol, oil, accessories, everything that the most modern garage has on offer. In principle you can get everything there that, as a motorist, you need, and maybe a few things that you don't. But in all departments except DIY the competition is fierce, much more so than anything the Consumers' Association has to face. Even so, it has worked and in 1984 a second, larger (but still small) station is to open in Brixton in London which will improve on model one in respect of everything we've learnt at Milton Keynes. With any luck and a great deal of hard work there should be a national chain of these motorists co-operatives by 1990. We shall see.

The next endeavour has been in a quite different field again, the recycling of domestic appliances and furniture. Despite the economic depression modern Britain is a throw-away society, wasting precious materials and energy on a colossal scale, much of it disposed of on dumps of one kind and another. It should be possible to save more and waste less. With so much unemployment an attempt should (it seemed to us) be made to recycle such products and simultaneously to train young people as service men and craftsmen. The first co-operative workshop called Brass Tacks was started, with help from the Manpower Services Commission, in Hackney, the second in Lambeth, the third in Greenwich, and they have spread out around the country from there. Most are dependent for wages on the MSC. One in Southwark is not, and has to make ends meet on its own.

These have led to the latest venture, the College of Health and its journal Self-Health, which is perhaps more like the

Consumers Association than it is like OK or Brass Tacks. The inspiration was given by the self-help groups which have flourished so exceedingly for people with disabilities or common problems to do with their health or that of their relatives. We have on our computer the names of 1200 of them, varying from large national bodies with a far-flung network of branches like the Spastics Society, the Multiple Sclerosis Society or the Diabetics Society to small but vigorous bodies like In Touch or the Dystonia Society. They are usually started by a sufferer or a small group of sufferers meeting in a private home. This is followed by a letter to a newspaper or a talk on the radio which heralds the beginning of a mass membership. The largest and richest support research on a grand scale and inform and influence the medical professions too. But almost always the foundation is the small cells of people who meet regularly and support each other on a continuing basis. At the centre is an information and co-ordinating centre while out in the cities, towns and villages are the small groups of people meeting each other face to face where the real work is done.

The new College of Health, as a self-help body not specialised like so many of the other 1200, met with a ready response. 1,000 people joined in the first month after it was launched. The information the College will collect and distribute is to serve the four main purposes, as I set them out in the first issue of Self-Health, in terms of prevention, self-care, treatment and alternative medicine.

With my own interest in self-help, whether expressed through the College of Health or in other ways, it was perhaps natural that I should be excited by the University of the Third Age. My own particular contribution to it has been the Third Age Project in Devon. This is a mutual support body for unemployed and early retired people over 40 as well as for people who have retired. The mix seems to work well. More and more local projects are being formed in the towns of Devon, as chapter nine describes.

I am glad there is such variety within the U3A. Every local initiative is unique. There needs to be the maximum local autonomy but backed up by a small national organisation which fosters an information co-operative for every locality. That is the way it is going and it seems as right for the U3A as it does for the College of Health or any other flourishing self-help group that I know.

PART 2. THE PARTICULAR : CASE-STUDIES OF BRITISH U3As.

Chapter 7

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE - NATIONWIDE

DIANNE NORTON

It is extraordinary how coherent a pattern emerges, given the superficially differing vantage-points of the observers: the moral urgency of Peter Laslett's splendid declaration of the rights of older people to education; Michel Philibert's elegant exposition of the historic necessity of such a phenomenon; the alignment of Paula Allman's penetrating analysis of the adult learning process with the self-help approach; David Radcliffe's demonstration of the movements' worldwide validity; and the apposite and empathetic character of community education and mutual aid, as so lucidly expressed by John Rennie and Michael Young.

What has throughout been taken for granted, but what is central to the reflections of all the essayists, indeed passionately embraced by them, is the independent status of elderly people. Above all, and from all those standpoints, the message is clear and direct, and it is one now constantly pressed by all whose task it is to formulate social policy for the elderly. It concerns the elderly person as actor, rather than spectator, as doer and participant, not as passive recipient, as a liberated and autonomous personality, and never a manipulated cypher.

The running theme, then, has been self-determination, and the overall objective that of older people mobilising their own energies and controlling their own educational future. It remains to be seen whether there are, so to speak, buttered parsnips as well as fine words, and, in this the second part of the book, we turn to the day-by-day detail of four real-life U3As, prefaced by a description of the current incidence of U3A groups in Britain and their present stages of development. This has been prepared by, and the four case-studies drawn together by Dianne Norton.

Dianne Norton studied, taught and researched in the social sciences both in her native Canada and in London. In 1981 she became the Co-ordinator of the Forum on the Rights of

Elderly People to Education (F. R. E. E.), the information exchange and pressure group promoting the general thesis that older citizens should have an improved educational deal. In the same year Dianne Norton was appointed Executive Secretary to the National Committee of the University of the Third Age. As such she has been largely responsible for the successful administration of British U3As in their formative years and she is uniquely placed to survey the national scene.

The University of the Third Age in Britain has been launched more times than a rubber boat in a high wind. That is not to say that any of these starts were in any way 'false starts' or that the lightweight craft was bounced backwards by a hostile public. The handful of people initially involved in U3A were, from the outset, excited by its prospects but assumptions that the nation's press would be equally enthusiastic were ill-founded. On the 17th of June, 1981, a press release announced the launch of the first University of the Third Age Committee, in Cambridge.

'The Committee of the proposed University of the Third Age in Cambridge held its first meeting at Trinity College last week. The University of the Third Age in Cambridge would be the first educational institution in this country run entirely by and for elderly and retired people. The Committee intends to draw up a plan to be presented at a Public Meeting in the Guildhall, Cambridge, at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, July, 20th. It is hoped that at this meeting citizens of the Cambridge area will declare their wish to be involved in this exciting new educational initiative.'

Although this historic document fell on deaf journalistic ears, the meeting itself was deemed by all who attended to be a great success. After introductions by Peter Laslett of Trinity College, Cambridge who was the first person to see the practical possibilities of the Third Age idea in this country, and Eric Midwinter, the keynote address was given by specially invited guest, Professeur Michel Philibert from the Université du Troisième Age in Grenoble. Michel Philibert has long association with the French movement and spoke as inspiringly of its value as he writes about it in chapter three.

But the implications of this meeting went far beyond the launch of the local initiative. Eric Midwinter reported the gathering on BBC'S Radio 4 'You and Yours' programme and sparked off nearly four hundred letters from all over the country.

'I write to record my interest. Your broadcast leads me to believe that you are suggesting something that I long thought must one day

develop, making learning accessible to those who realise its value for its own sake'. and 'I have been trying to teach myself something of the Arts and although I find it stimulating to study, I know it would be beneficial to have some guidance and an opportunity to communicate with like-minded people. I am 72 years old and live alone'. or 'I am quite convinced that such an establishment would discover a lot of talent otherwise going completely to waste.' 'I am 68 years old and live in a dreamy Dorset town,' wrote another. 'The usual outlets are not available here, firstly, transport is almost non-existent. The WEA caters for people who have finished their education, namely retired professionals. They want flora and fauna and architecture and get it. I once enrolled in a class for beginners learning to type but it was for young people hoping to earn a living. I would like to learn the basics of English, how to compose and write a letter properly. In fact I would like to start where I left off compulsory schooling at 11 years old. I passed the scholarship exam to go to grammar school but developed rheumatic fever and never went to school again. My dearest possession is a letter from my head teacher telling me I passed the exam. I always wanted to be a teacher, bit late now, but I've never lost my desire for learning'. and so they rolled in.

It was these letters, rather than the press reaction, which we felt indicated the true level of interest in the idea and since that time, every public mention, no matter how small, has brought an encouraging and widespread response from old, lonely and bored people, from people about to retire and worried at the prospect, from people already heavily involved in voluntary activities but intrigued by this one, by relatives of elderly people concerned about their lack of involvement and from people with professional interests.

Peter Laslett undertook to draw up the 'Objects, Principles and Institutional Forms of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge' and it is this document, completed in August 1981 which has become the basis for all subsequent philosophical and policy statements made by what is now the National Committee. But, in order to respond to that first tide of letters, we composed a statement outlining the meaning of 'Third Age', briefly mentioning its development in France and suggesting the sorts of activities which might possibly be developed in this country. We also included one concept which had in fact been central to all the early discussions, but which has subsequently been modified, or laid aside completely in some cases. The relevant paragraph is:

'The key word to understanding how such a University of the Third age might actually work in 'negotiation'. The ultimate

structure, we believe, should be a self-generated governing body of elderly and retired people, whose primary task would be to negotiate for the use of whatever facilities and resources, including teachers, where necessary to the development of whatever educational activities they chose to pursue.'

The concept of the Third Age Committee as a 'negotiator' owes its origin to the existing style of the French movement and to Peter Laslett's conviction, following a study tour abroad, (described in chapter two) that the educational institutions of this country must be forced, if necessary, to open their doors on a grand scale, to elderly learners. At the present time this function of negotiator has not been realised in any extensive sense. Certainly, as we will see, as we look at the development of local groups where negotiation has been used, it has been on a limited scale for the use of rooms, or for publicity. The U3A in London is the only one to have taken this further and is actually negotiating with a variety of providers of educational opportunities, usually short courses, for access for limited numbers of their members.

In half a dozen areas university departments, schools and colleges are playing an initiative role, but the impetus has come from the professional staff and not from would be third age users, as originally envisaged. Peter Laslett's *Objects and Principles* are, however, heavily imbued with the philosophy of self-help, which was one factor in the change of emphasis. Ironically, another contributing factor has probably been the success of the Cambridge movement in doing everything for themselves. Right from the outset the enthusiasts they gathered to them were sufficiently talented, experienced and imaginative to proceed from theory to practice without recourse to outside advice. If, as they have now decided, their organisation has become too large and too complex to be run entirely on a voluntary basis, then they themselves will have to fund administrative help but will continue to make their own decisions on all U3A matters. Obviously Cambridge is an area oozing with scholastic and cultural advantages and many of the U3A members are in some way 'touched' by the academic world. But Cambridge is our 'prototype' and much has been learned from their experience. However, it is necessary and advantageous to study the progress and requirements of quite different environments. They may find that they need to be negotiators. Although negotiations may open some academic doors, a real break through will, I believe, occur in a more indirect way. The spread of Third Age groups will eventually create a climate of opinion in which educational

pursuits are accepted as being appropriate activities for older adults and in which demands can rightfully be made on traditional providers.

The longitudinal development of the University of the Third Age in Britain can be illustrated by taking a latitudinal look at it now. A cross-section reveals local groups in various stages of development, manifesting similar enough features to form an enlightening pattern.

(A) Stage One: The Spontaneous Initiative

Perhaps in the future the National U3A Committee will have sufficient resources to employ or at least provide expenses for a peripatetic organiser who would be able to move in on fertile ground and promote new developments. However, in the past and for the present, we rely entirely on one or more people in an area giving the incentive, committing their time and energy and doing what they can to bring local groups into being. From that very first batch of letters, following Eric Midwinter's broadcast, one or two correspondents have now become committed organisers. Several others came as 'students' to the experimental Easter School held in Cambridge in March 1982 and left determined to start groups of their own. Others have read about the movement's progress and written asking what they can do and some 'beginners' are professional adult educators either fully employed or partially retired who, through their experiences with older learners, have grasped the possibilities of U3A.

In September 1982 the National Committee, which had grown out of the original Cambridge Committee and was now chaired by Michael Young, staged another launch. This time it was to announce the publication of U3A DIY: A practical manual designed to guide groups and individuals wishing to start a Third Age University or similar self-help educational project. U3A DIY has been successful enough to be updated and reprinted. It contains an introductory section on WHAT is a University of the Third Age. The HOW section gives a step-by-step path, from commitment to realisation, for the new organiser to follow. It also includes sample letters, a poster, questionnaire, record sheet, suggested themes for study groups, an item on doing your own research and a media page, as well as short case studies of some differing U3A groups already underway. The final section tells people WHERE to go for help, resources, information and the location of all existing groups. The pack contains catalogues and hand-outs from a variety of organisations, such as the National Extension College, Help the Aged and Age

Concern publications departments and radio and TV companies. Many new organisers have made use of these materials when planning their first moves.

The other service which the National office offers at this stage is a list of names and addresses of people who have made enquiries about U3A from their particular area. All letters from places where currently no contact or group exists are indexed so that, when someone does take the initiative of bringing together like-minded people, there is a nucleus of informed people as a starting point. Experience seems to show that it is best to start with small gatherings of interested people. As U3A DIY says, 'It has been found that explaining U3A is an extremely personal business. It is a new notion and it is not susceptible to explanation in a few key words in a poster.' In some cases these initial groups have been made up entirely of retired people; in other areas they have been professional educators and, in still others, it has been a combination of the two that has got things going. They have all seemed to share the need, whatever their backgrounds, for an intense discussion of the underlying philosophy, the possible forms and the nomenclature of the new idea. As Eric Midwinter reminds in chapter one, the labels associated with old people and words such as 'university' are heavy with connotations which bring out strong feelings in most people, so a considerable amount of time has been spent in early meetings in trying to find some compromise or an acceptable and catch title. To date we have a clutch of Universities, as well as the Third Age Learning Circle/Conference/College (TALC), the Third Age Project (TAP), Self-help Activities in Retirement (SHARE), The Leicester Education and Research Network (LEARN), The Association of Students of the Third Age (ASTA) and the Yeovil Shared Interest Society (YSIS), as well as a group in Stevenage who dislike both university and third age and have chosen the title 'Leisure 50'.

The particular demography of each locale, the existence of adult education provision and facilities, such as meeting rooms, are taken into consideration at these early meetings. The situation in Norfolk, for instance, where a would-be-organiser is finding little enthusiasm in Norwich, which is basically well-catered for, but a different response in the scattered pockets of rural population, presents two quite different pictures. This first stage of development is a tricky one. It requires the commitment of time and energy and frequently of money. Many of these early organisers who have set out to float the idea with no help from institutions or other bodies have used their own money for photocopying, postage and phone calls. In some cases

the U3A National Committee has been able to help with a very modest grant. In those areas where the initiative has been taken by persons with 'institutional connections', help with publicity and communications and the provision of meeting places has generally been 'absorbed', in many cases, in departmental expenses.

(B) Stage Two: The Public Gathering

In most cases, the originating Committee has organised a public meeting or one-day conference to launch the local initiative on the public scene. Local radio and press have usually been helpful in publicising such meetings as have the libraries. Some meetings are open to the general public while some only to the invited who may be those people who had responded to various items of publicity and written in asking for more information, or, as in the case of the initial meeting at Surrey University, they may be mostly representatives of various professional bodies and departments concerned either with the elderly in the community or adult education provision. It has been found to be important to invite representation from as many interested groups as possible, if for no other reason than to allay any suspicions that may arise about the future intentions of U3A. In some areas where people from, for instance, the LEA and WEA and the university extension department have not been included in early discussions or kept informed, they have reacted defensively when faced with what looks like a possible threat to their student numbers. In the few areas where difficulties have arisen they have generally been resolved through consultation and general agreement to co-operate. In Lancaster, for example, the U3A has agreed that, if a circumstance arises where any of its groups wishes to move into a more structured or 'taught' pattern of activities, it might become a WEA class. Alternatively, any WEA class which becomes too small to be viable could transform itself into a U3A self-help group. In Surrey, where the area to be served is large and the population scattered, it is hoped that early consultation will ensure the possibilities of using the established network of adult education centres as a basis for U3A groups throughout the county.

(C) Stage Three: The Working Party

From the stage of the public meeting the pattern most commonly followed has been the setting up of a small working party.... a group of dedicated people who will look more intensely at the best ways of translating theory into practice given the particular circumstances of the area. A lot of effort is put in at this stage to finding out what resources, human and otherwise, are

available in the area. Organisers have been known to go out and actually stop people in the streets and ask what they thought of the U3A idea. In Hyde, Cheshire, members of a group from the Community School, in the course of a summer project which involved knocking on doors, included questions designed to locate people interested in the Third Age idea. Other groups have used questionnaires based on the sample provided in U3A DIY to elicit details such as previous occupation, interests, what new interests people wanted to develop, what people felt they could contribute (accommodation/transport/administrative skills/teaching), how much time they were prepared to devote per week, how much they would be willing to pay, information about housebound people and so on. Having located the potential resources, the working party must then devise the best ways of using what is available to meet the wishes of prospective members.

The Association of Students of the Third Age (ASTA) in Oxford has developed an interesting variation on this theme. They have made themselves available on one day a week in a public and central location and advertised the fact that members of ASTA would be there to advise older adults on educational matters in general. They discuss with enquirers what sort of educational experience they are looking for and will point people in the direction of courses or services on offer from the Open University, the LEA, WEA, Extra-mural department etc. They will also register any interests that are not catered for through existing provision and hope to be able to fill these gaps through their own organisation.

It is not all plain sailing. Take U3A in Mid-Wales: despite a £1000 grant from the Manpower Services Commission 'Opportunities for Volunteering in Wales' scheme, Roger Palmer, the organiser, found it difficult to gather together a committee, based on Montgomery, from over a wide area. A postal shot to interested parties and five hundred excellent posters - 'This Life is the Great Schoolmaster. Experience the Mighty Volume' - throughout Powys proved equally unsuccessful. Roger Palmer now favours a much more locally based project, perhaps in Newtown, with less of an academic bent. He is convinced the need exists and hopes, perhaps through a project focus (such as a look at rural transport for the elderly or local attitudes to ageism) to further the cause.

(D) Stage Four: The Mainstream Programme

In order to set up a variety of study groups, each looking at particular subjects, it is necessary to have a reasonable number of members which is not always the case in the early stages.

What has happened in Stevenage, Harpenden, and Nottingham is that the U3A group, which may consist of around 25 people, has started out by planning a programme of regular weekly or fortnightly meetings. Members are asked to make presentations on topics in which they have some interest and experience and to lead discussions, or in some cases, speakers are invited in who are non-members and the discussion prolonged over two sessions. In Stevenage the general meetings have now also given birth to two or three smaller study groups studying languages and other topics.

The areas where organisation has been successful and swift have tended to be fairly homogeneously populated and relatively concentrated. Transport here is not, on the whole, a problem. It is easy to spark off an interest in locally based activities. But other areas have more hurdles to overcome before they can really commence operations. Oddly enough, some rural and urban areas are faced with very similar problems. In Manchester and Sussex initial meetings have indicated a good degree of interest. Manchester held an introductory meeting to which they invited interested professionals from a wide range of organisations and educational institutions, as well as retired people who had expressed an interest. Leslie Jones, from the staff of the University department of Adult and Continuing Education was asked to co-ordinate efforts to launch U3A in Manchester. The ad hoc committee hoped to arouse enough support to start a programme of activities and had previously manned a stall at the Manchester College of Adult Education during enrolment week and distributed questionnaires to retired people who came in. However, despite much planning and enthusiasm, activities in Manchester have, to date, been disappointing. They have found that the greatest problem is the spread of the population, the distances and the paucity of numbers actually involved. They did manage to get two groups together in different areas, one looking at local history and the other at computers, but the question of how to provide leadership in a variety of subjects over a large area in which travel is both difficult and expensive, remains unanswered. As with Mid-Wales, the likely solution does seem to be the development of purely local groups, wherever a spark appears, and then, eventually, the spread of enough groups to create a support network covering the whole conurbation. It is interesting that, in some degree, the problem of the diverse rural area and the sprawling conurbation turn out to be much the same, and a specifically localised approach seems to be the answer.

In Sussex and also in Gloucestershire the problems proved

insurmountable to volunteer organisers. However, while the latter county's local contact gave up the struggle and the Sussex U3A failed in its first attempt for other reasons, a new initiative there looks much more solid. Peter Grainge of Bishop Otter College of Further Education in Chichester briefed a number of his colleagues concerned with extension work and adult education, as well as a representative of the LEA, on U3A. He then called a small meeting for intense discussion of the issues. The professionals felt that a U3A network would be an extension of the college's services to the community and that the college could benefit from the feedback from more mature students and that some may be reintroduced to education through U3A and perhaps become 'regular' students.

They invited a number of people who had registered their interest to a day conference and the result was that four retired people, from different areas in the county, volunteered to try and introduce the U3A idea into their home locales. Peter Grainge drew up some guidelines to assist them in making a start and it was agreed to meet again in about six months to discuss progress. So far it looks as if the efforts of the local organisers has produced uneven results. The notion is that local groups will develop quite independently according to the needs and resources of the area, but that they will be linked into a county network to derive whatever benefit they can from mutual support, activities and exchanges. It is still too early to see if this system will succeed but it does seem to be on the right track. This sort of network, which capitalises on small, local groups as the foundation, may be the only one that can work. The style of the U3A should be such that it makes opportunities readily available to older people wherever they happen to be.

London and Devon are another pair of areas with large, scattered populations, but both seem to have developed a strong central base which will act as the administrative centre to co-ordinate and service the many local groups. It must be admitted that these examples, and that of Sussex, are very fortunate in that they have, to differing degrees, independent funding and positive support from an established institution. In the case of Sussex the idea is being promoted by professional staff within the parameters of their own department. London and Devon are, to some extent, independent wings of larger organisations. A more detailed case study of Devon is in chapter eight. In London the U3A is supported by a grant from the Voluntary and Christian Service Charity, and was run from an office at the University of London in the department of Extra-mural studies, by a full time administrator on a year's secondment

from the Polytechnic of North London, plus a large number of voluntary workers. At this point in time it is difficult to envisage how the network approach, obviously so essential to areas with the kinds of demographic characteristics outlined above, could work without a substantial input of funds to support the central service mechanism. There seems no reason why such a mechanism could not be operated by volunteers, but the costs of communications, in whatever form, are high and cannot be avoided.

In contrast, 'self-contained units' whether they be of thirty or so members as in Harpenden or 500 as in Cambridge are able to support themselves through subscriptions and concessionary rents or freely given premises. The necessary expenses of photocopying of newsletters or information circulars, postage, telephone or refreshments at meetings, are being met out of the members' pockets. So far no U3A has successfully solicited funds from local firms or industry. 'Starter grants' have been obtained, in one or two cases, from Age Concern England's Operation Enterprise and, as mentioned, the U3A National Committee has been able to help in a few cases of individuals operating completely on their own during the first stages of publicising the idea.

The Manpower Services Commission, as U3As Mid-Wales and Lancaster have found may certainly be a possible source of funds for those groups which can present an attractive package of opportunities for older people, especially if they are catering for the older unemployed workers. It has always been understood that each local group will be responsible for undertaking to raise its own revenue as a part of its activities. There are still strong feelings in some groups that no members should be asked for more than a few pence per session, to cover immediate costs, such as tea or coffee. Others, such as the Cambridge group, feel that members want to make a financial commitment, on the basis that if you pay for something, you value it more. Its £20 annual subscription is by far the largest, with most groups asking for something less than £5 per year or alternatively, a sessional fee of around twenty five pence.

As each local group grows and diversifies into more and varied activities, obviously their administrative structures will become more complex. Cambridge has now reached the stage of being 'governed' by a committee elected from the semi-annual meeting of Life Members. It is understandable that in an enterprise such as the U3A committees or working parties should consist, first of all, of people who volunteer or are asked to participate, rather than members elected by the group. It is assumed that, as memberships increase, local groups will all

reach a level of maturity where they will be democratic in their choice of leaders and in the making of decisions on all matters pertaining to their activities.

During the summer of 1983 the Third Age Trust was registered with the Charity Commissioners. The Objects of the Trust are listed as 'the advancement of education, and, in particular, the education of middle aged and elderly people'. The Trust will be governed by a Council which will include the members of the National Committee for the University of the Third Age (who will ultimately be subject to election) and Councillors representing all affiliated local groups. Local groups will be free to choose whatever name they please, without having to include either 'university' or 'third age' in the title. Any local group may apply to the National Committee for affiliation. They will be represented by a person chosen from a properly established committee or group of officers, or from the group as a whole. Each local affiliated group will be eligible for charitable status. This move should, among other things, facilitate the raising of funds at the local level.

Communications between members is vital to any successful programme. Several local groups now print and distribute their own newsletters giving details of courses and other activities. U3A London has launched its own magazine with a wide range of literary and practical contributions from members. In a venture where individual study groups are meeting regularly, there does need to be some method of ensuring the feeling of belonging to a wider movement. At the local level the newsletter can achieve this result, as well as providing much needed information. The same applies on the national level. For the first year or so of its life the national movement lacked a feeling of cohesiveness. It was possible to visit groups who knew nothing of the existence of similar groups in other parts of the country. An informal newsletter was distributed to organisers from August 1982 but too often the information it contained on new developments never reached the actual members. A movement like the U3A must rely for impetus on the spirit of its members. They are pioneers but they do need to know that they are not alone. Also, because of the diversity of the programmes undertaken, there is a great deal to be learned from looking at what others are doing. So, in September 1983, the National Committee introduced 'The Last Post. . . . the Newspaper of the U3A and Associated Groups'. Distributed free to thousands of members throughout the country, the paper itself was greeted with enthusiasm but its title, thought by a few to be a rather witty play on words, was roundly condemned by the majority. The paper will become a regular feature as long

as the local members are prepared to support it. It will be re-christened but otherwise continue much as it started, as a vehicle for exhibiting local group news, expounding relevant views and exploring many areas of interest to all U3A members.

It is possible to imagine a future where Third Age Learning Centres are dotted around the country, being run entirely by and for the benefit of retired people. However, for the time being, groups meet wherever they can. In a small town outside Lancaster a group meets in school rooms while the children are at games. In Wakefield meetings are held in the local Library. In Yeovil the HQ for the U3A is a room over the swimming baths and in Stevenage the Leisure 50 group meets at various institutions. Some activities are also taking place in peoples' homes, which seems a logical way to provide educational activities on a small scale. It also answers the expressed object of providing opportunities for those who for whatever reason are unable to leave their homes or get about with ease. The U3A in Bristol has also stated its intention of providing educational activities for the housebound and may even arrange one-to-one exchanges to take place in people's homes. The National Committee is hoping to encourage this kind of experiment.

While activities have developed freely in different centres according to peoples' needs and resources, there is a pattern emerging which seems to exemplify the shape of U3As to come. Cambridge, Saffron Walden, London, Harpenden, Stevenage, Lancaster and others all have programmes that include a regular general meeting and/or lecture as well as smaller, specific study groups. The focus of the small seminar groups depends entirely on the interests and expertise of the U3A members and their willingness to act as leaders. The initiative may come either from an individual offering to lead or tutor a group in a subject of their choice or from the knowledge that there are x number of people who want to study a certain topic. It is then up to the organisers to find a suitable leader and a venue.

The earliest analysis of subjects-wanted was made from those first letters which came in response to Eric Midwinter's broadcast in July 1981. The subject asked for most often was English literature with others requesting creative writing, poetry and quite basic English or English grammar. History was second on the list, including social, medieval, Roman, modern and local. A smattering expressed an interest in politics, current affairs, sociology and philosophy. Various languages were requested and, in the arts, suggestions ranged from jazz piano to art and music appreciation. Two people wished to study theology while one wanted to go hill walking. Those asking for subjects in the

scientific or technical fields were few and far between. The questionnaires sent out to all prospective participants in the Cambridge Easter School reinforced the picture of an emphatic interest in the arts and humanities with little interest in science or technology. However, in practice, there does seem to be some desire to look at topics in this latter area. Gardening, both practical and historical, is popular but perhaps the area where there is the greatest growth of interest is in computer studies. 'Looking at the Stars' is a popular course in Yorkshire and involves the members in skywatching. The Harpenden group enjoy a visit to British Aerospace; the Stevenage group have heard talks on bees while Cambridge offers 'The Plant in Relation to East Anglian Environment' as well as a course on nutrition.

Languages are understandably popular, with the more predictable ones being supplemented by Serbo-Croat and Chinese. One or two groups have already arranged exchange visits with Université du Troisième Age groups in France and it is hoped that this interest in language as an area of study will lead to many connections being forged with similar groups in other countries. Study tours may also take the opportunity of looking at other areas of interest such as culture, politics, art, architecture and so on.

In the arts there is also a wide range of interest from the appreciative to the practical. Many U3A members have started to develop talents and skills that they never knew they had. In Buckfastleigh in Devon such a high proportion of their members have developed or revealed an interest in arts and crafts that they are hoping to open their own shop to sell their products to tourists. Cambridge found that their recent exhibition of art was a good showcase for interesting the general public in what the U3A was doing.

(E) Stage Five. The Diversification Process.

Whatever the subject matter, the style of U3A study recognises the needs of people in this particular generation to socialise with others who have similar interests, outlooks and problems. It is therefore not surprising that having come together, they soon find they have other things in common which leads to the organisation of further activities. In some cases different types of activities have arisen simultaneously but what most people would call 'recreational' or 'leisure' pursuits are now included in many U3A programmes. Rambling, cycling, swimming, yoga, short tennis and other games are available. Organised walks are sometimes combined with local history investigations or the study of gardens. More sedentary activities such as scrabble, bridge and chess have also found takers. This kind of activity neatly demonstrates the 'free form' of the University of the Third Age idea. The

members of the group take the opportunities for expansion, change, new directions and stimulation, wherever they see them without being bound by any preconceived notions or strategies of 'the course'.

In the smaller Third Age groups such as Yeovil and Saffron Walden, recreational or leisure opportunities are just one segment of the whole spectrum planned by the organisers. Where greater numbers are involved, as in Cambridge, a separate or sub-committee takes the responsibility of arranging activities, venues and so on. This is symptomatic of a new stage of development. The philosophy of the U3A is about sharing..... whether it is a sharing of resources, information, experience or skills. It is certainly about the sharing of responsibility. The one notable failure of a U3A, the initial attempt to get activities off the ground in Sussex, occurred for this reason. The enthusiastic, well-motivated initiator seemed incapable of sharing the responsibility or of taking a share of the experience and knowledge of others. We have to expect and anticipate problems of this nature and, as always, we have learned something from the experience. They are probably inevitable in any organisation where volunteers are asked to come forward to help get a new idea off the ground. Perhaps the situation of those involved in U3A makes it particularly vulnerable. Here we have a group of people who have, in retiring, relinquished what might be called their 'power base'. A few will inevitably feel an uncontrollable urge to fill that gap. Others, hopefully the majority, will find fulfillment in the co-operative exercise of their experience.

As the educational and other 'offerings' increase, and the membership grows, so the administrative structure will become more complex. Ideally this development should be seen as an increase in the opportunities for participation of more and more individual members. As more 'jobs' need to be done, then more of their skills will be employed. The superstructure should develop horizontally rather than vertically.

At the moment four areas have their own U3A offices. London has a full-time Academic Administrator and a large rota of volunteers. The office is located in the Department of Extra-mural studies at the University of London. Cambridge has an office for which it pays a modest rent. It is now staffed by a part-time paid secretary and many volunteers, although, as was mentioned earlier, the Committee has decided they do need more paid help. In Mid-Wales a space for a U3A office has been given by the Montgomery College of Further Education and in Devon the TAP office is financed by their foundation grant.

In Bristol, Manchester, Lancaster and Sussex, the point of

contact and liaison for U3A activities is the office of various members of staff in an Adult Education Centre, extra-mural departments and a College of Further Education. Although the promotion of U3A is openly supported by these departments, in most cases, separate budgets for expenses do not exist and funding may be 'hidden'. This is also true in the cases of one or two other centres where the initiative is at a very early stage. In about one dozen places all the U3A activities are administered by people from their own homes.

Peter Laslett's original 'Objects and Principles' place considerable emphasis on research on two fronts. Principle Thirteen states:

'Every member will be encouraged to join in the widespread accumulation of scattered data required for advancement in knowledge of certain kinds (for example archaeology, natural history, the history of population and social structure, the history of climate and geological events). Every member will be expected where possible to have a research project of his or her own, and to write up the results.'

Research of this kind cannot be separated from other academic pursuits as most members will at some time or another be expected to make presentations to their study group and in the course of so doing will have used research techniques. The Harpenden group have been helped by one of their members, a retired tutor-librarian, who has produced useful notes on information retrieval using the local library resources. Apart from the obvious benefits of getting knowledge through these methods, the encouragement of research will undoubtedly open up new ways of learning to many older people who in their past educational lives have experienced little beyond the more sedentary styles of learning.

The second kind of research to be nurtured is referred to in Principle Nineteen.

'Apart from the voluntary research undertakings of its members on every suitable subject, the university shall seek to set up professional research activity into the process of ageing, especially as a social phenomenon.'

This Principle has already led to the formation of three research groups. In Saffron Walden they are planning research into 'migration' in retirement and housing problems in their area. They have already made contact with an expert in this field and he will speak to the U3A and offer them guidance.

The Cambridge Research group, under the guidance of Peter Laslett, completed their first project some months ago. They monitored all four television channels for one week and have

subsequently been analysing the images of the aged and ageing discovered therein.

In Oxford a research project is being set up in conjunction with community education workers to examine the educational and leisure needs of elderly people in one area of Oxford and to look at how these needs can best be met, with particular reference to a day centre in that area.

The embryonic group at the University of Surrey hoping to start a U3A network in that county is currently mooting the interesting idea of researching the development of the U3A in Surrey as it actually happens. All these projects have exciting prospects. Far too little research is undertaken in this country in the area of social and educational gerontology. Financial stringency makes it highly unlikely that professional bodies will be able to change this state of affairs much in the near future. Who better then, to open up this area, than the retired themselves, with in many cases, the interested support of the professionals? Not only will the actual work be stimulating to those involved, but the consequent knowledge gained will most certainly benefit a very wide public.

(F) Stage Six: The Future Potential

The picture of current activity gives a hopeful vision of future development. Individuals take the initiative, involve others and a new group comes into being. Having discussed the idea and its relevance to local conditions, they introduce it to a wider public. People begin to commit themselves to turning the idea into reality. Information is gathered about who wants to do what, where it can be done and whether it actually happens! More and more people with more and more skills, and more and more needs, become involved as the network grows. More questions are posed..... more answers found.

No one can say what will be the ultimate form of the University of the Third Age in Britain. Quite likely there will be no ultimate form. It will go on growing and changing as the needs and resources change. Within the foreseeable future though, it is possible to predict various developments, some of which are extension of activities already underway.

Over the next few years many new groups will arise at local level. If, as seems likely, the local group is the most appropriate form for Third Age learning then it is possible to imagine thousands of such units covering the country. Each will offer a variety of study groups, weekly or fortnightly general meetings or lectures, opportunities for the participation of the housebound or less mobile, research activities, both for individual pursuits

and into wider areas of relevant interest, sporting and recreational activities, general social opportunities such as the luncheon clubs now functioning in Cambridge and Saffron Walden, outings, to places of interest and to cultural and other events. . . . in fact, any kind of service which the local group feels it might offer, including advice on other forms of educational opportunities supplied by other providers.

But these groups will not operate in isolation. There will be regional networks such as those already developing in Sussex and Lancaster. There will be opportunities for Third Agers to take part in courses and activities put on by other providers, such as the scheme being launched in London whereby London U3A members are kept informed of chances to participate in short courses on a variety of topics at various institutions throughout the capital.

There must be a strong national body whose function will be primarily one of liaison and service. The development of a national newspaper for the U3A and allied groups is vital to the growth and maintenance of a universal spirit. It is also an essential tool for the local groups. A further development will be a journal, published at intervals and dedicated to the exhibition of research findings, and creative 'produce' of U3A members.

As has already been mentioned, exchanges, usually for the purpose of practising languages learned, have been undertaken and always include social and other learning opportunities. This is an area where great expansion is possible. Many local British U3A groups will want to offer their members the possibilities of travelling abroad and meeting like-minded people from other countries. They will, of course, have to be prepared to host groups on their home territories. The focus of such tours need not be language at all, but may bring together students, for example, of archaeology, to make joint explorations, or enthusiastic walkers who may want to ramble in distant fields with foreign friends.

Another function that a national body can perform is to organise exchanges within this country. These may take two forms. It is hoped to be able to compile a list of lecturers, tutors or group leaders, who are experts in any number of different subjects. These individuals would then be invited to visit another U3A group either for a single lecture, a series of talks or a session of workshops. Their fares would be paid by the host group who would also offer accommodation, perhaps in members' homes, to keep the costs as low as possible. In this way the emerging expertise and experience of U3A members can be made available to a wider public.

Secondly, whole U3A groups may wish to make exchanges.

A group from London may want to visit Lancaster to make a study of flora and fauna in the Lake District while students of drama at Nottingham may appreciate a few days at the Festival Theatre in Chichester, and some system may be devised for organising reciprocal hospitality.

The lessons learned from observing the development of new groups needs to be continually re-assessed and re-distributed to new initiators. The U3A DIY has already gone some way towards fulfilling this service, but it will need constant updating. There are possibilities for producing other kinds of materials that will be useful to the successful launching and maintenance of groups. There is very little material available in this country on 'group dynamics' and the vital techniques of keeping a group balanced and productive. The National Extension College now has a unit promoting useful exchanges between study circles and a fruitful link may be forged with the U3A. Again, there are many possibilities including the development of courses for group leaders, or the production of video cassettes and/or printed material which would be designed to help individuals overcome the problems which inevitably arise in self-help groups.

In our press release heralding the launch of U3A DIY we also announced another development, labelled as 'a formula that could enrich the lives of Britain's rapidly increasing elderly population'. This anticipated active liaison with the new Channel Four programme 'Years Ahead', but has still, after more than a year, not been fulfilled. Our press release spoke of encouraging U3A groups 'to set up study circles to use the documentary features as a basis for discussion and research'. We also hoped that U3A groups would become actively involved in contributing to the 'Outrageous' media watch feature (seeking out examples of ageism) and using the 'Years Ahead Noticeboard' feature. However, there has been a general lack of interest in the programme from U3A members and what we termed as an 'opportunity to participate actively in this major television series for older people... which exemplifies the spirit of the University of the Third Age' has not been taken up.

However, we do try and continue to encourage U3A groups to use television and radio material in general as a basis for their study groups. This may be one answer to the increasingly raised problems of providing sufficiently stimulating activities in remote, rural areas. The new edition of U3A DIY, published in September 1983, has a Media Page explaining the various ways in which groups can use what is available and how they can make contact with producers and providers. We have also arranged for local groups to receive on a regular basis the publications of both

Independent and BBC Continuing Education departments.

Whatever shape and dominion the national Third Age body takes on will be entirely dictated by its grass roots. Direction will be imposed from below, and services developed at the request of local groups. The one prerogative that may have to come from the centre is a duty to remind the local groups that they are part of a national and possibly international network, to encourage, if not nag, them into accepting and fulfilling a 'duty' to older adults in general. The sight of large numbers of retired people actively and happily involved in broadly defined 'educational' activities, benefitting from programmes that they have planned themselves to meet their needs and make the most of their resources, and backed up by their own research findings, can only make the general public more aware that this form of activity is not only suitable but highly beneficial, not just for those with previous adult educational experience but for the great majority of older people.

And, as a final 'nationwide' pronouncement, it is worth noting that, as of the spring of 1984, there were, in Britain, over fifty U3A groups, in one or other of the five stages of development, involving a total membership of over 4,000 people.

Chapter 8

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE IN CAMBRIDGE

VERNON FUTERMAN

Vernon Futerma was educated in Berlin and Paris and has held high executive posts in manufacturing industry. Having retired early, he has devoted himself totally to the successful U3A in Cambridge, for which he is the Director of Studies.

This is to be a factual report on the history and development of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge, from its beginnings to the present day, although it will of course become essential at certain points in the narrative to dwell briefly on the schools of thought that have pervaded the whole aura of U3A.

The first major public meeting to discuss the possibilities of establishing the U3A idea in this country was held in Cambridge in June 1981. From this meeting arose what eventually became the first committee. They set about planning the so-called 'March Week' or 'Easter School'. This was a six day period at the end of March 1982 conceived as a trial balloon to prove the workability of self-help seminars. About 75 people enrolled, 25 from outside Cambridge, and were asked to fill in a questionnaire listing interests and experience. With this material the organisers allocated people to study groups, ranging in size from 5 to 15 and covering a wide range of topics, and selected people to make presentations in the seminars on different days. The result was consensus of opinion on the positive nature of the experiment with the proviso, expressed by a majority of the participants that, in future, a more structured formula should be applied to the aspect of U3A rather than a completely 'anarchic' free for all which would not lend itself to the more serious intentions of study of many of the members.

Beyond the fact that there was a definite demand and need expressed for this type of self-help institution, nothing else was clear and obvious. As a result of the Easter School a number of

new people were co-opted onto the committee and we began the process of deciding just how to proceed. Certain principles soon crystallised into definite guidelines for the programme to be achieved. We hoped to begin in October of the same year and that meant that there was precious little time for preparing a 'syllabus' committing tutors and speakers and, worst of all, for booking rooms and halls as venues for all these activities. In addition, in order to attract members we had to have an enrolment drive and that had to be prepared for with a publicity campaign.

In the course of the ensuing weeks three streams of activity were planned for Cambridge. Firstly, a series of weekly lectures to be called 'Foundation Lectures', as they were to serve as the foundation for particular pursuits of interest and might later on be followed by a series of seminars on the same or allied subjects. The name was also chosen because these lectures could be considered as being of fundamental interest to the philosophy of mind extension that was to be accepted as one of the tenets of our organisation. Luckily, we had in Cambridge sufficient eminent scholars and thinkers who were only too happy to give us their time and let us share a little knowledge with them. The framework of the lectures was to be entirely informal. They were, and still are, being held on Wednesday afternoons and take the following format: The meeting is opened by an 'official' of U3A, usually a member of the Executive Committee, utilising this opportunity to announce any communication, arrangements or future plans. As a very large number of members attend, this can truly be called a meeting of the 'university'. This platform was most important in the first year of our existence as our only means of communication. After the announcements, the Chairman introduces the speaker whose talk, frequently accompanied by slides or other illustrations, will last approximately one hour. The weekly lectures have been so enthusiastically received that people have come to regard them as a regular Cambridge event and allow for them in planning their diaries. There are usually non-members of the U3A present as the lectures are advertised in the local papers' 'What's On' Column. Non-members now pay an entrance fee as an accepted routine.

Secondly, a programme of weekly seminars, covering a wide range of topics and usually taking a period of ten weeks is the second stream of academic activity. After the first term, which was in many ways experimental but nonetheless very successful, a lot of the original seminars such as History of Art, Political Science, Music, English Literature and so on, were carried forward and are even now still running. Others had to be

terminated after the first term for various reasons, such as the non-availability of a tutor, and were replaced by new ventures, always maintaining an average level of between 35 to 40 different seminars every week. This includes Fine Arts classes which started with a class in sculpture and to which, at the beginning of this year, a Painting and Drawing class was added.

Since the beginning of the 1983/83 academic year, when it was obvious that U3A Cambridge was here to stay, it has been our aim to run classes and seminars on a long term structured basis. For instance we have now started a Modern English Literature course with a syllabus covering at least two but possibly three years, beginning with Thomas Hardy, followed by Joyce and so on. Another new venture is going to be a Drama and Acting seminar which we hope might lead to the formation of a Dramatic Society U3A Mimmers or Grand-Mimmers?

Thirdly, there is our Language Workshop of which we are, with some justification, very proud. With a maximum of eighteen classes in different languages and/or differing levels of proficiency per week, we think we are one of the largest foreign language teaching institutions in the UK. The range of classes is enormous covering, at one end, Mandarin Chinese and, at the other, Ancient Greek. In between lie the obvious and popular modern European languages at all levels of fluency, Modern Greek, Russian, and we can now add Serbo-Croat. There are also two classes in Latin.

In order to complete the academic picture, we have, since U3A started in Cambridge, formed a sub-committee to concentrate on Research. The first study undertaken by the group was on 'The image of the elderly' as portrayed on television. A report of the findings has now been published. Other activities are being planned by the Research Group. They are considering the setting up a separate Media Study Unit which could do work for outside bodies requiring that sort of help with their own monitoring. There has already been some response to the idea and it certainly offers tremendous scope in an entirely different direction to our other functions.

The establishment of our own Newsletter should be seen as part of the intellectual exercises of our institution, but it is, in fact, much more than that and has, with the few issues so far produced, caught the imagination of our members and assumed by now a fundamental need for communication that has dwarfed the most optimistic forecast. It has taken the courageous and certainly well-meaning efforts of the individuals on our committee to launch this Newsletter. However, although the issues produced have been useful and important, we have discovered two

areas of deficiency: one is a concerted effort to establish an editorial policy and the other is the organisation of a distribution system. The latter, in view of our inability to fund a regular posting of newsletter to all members (approximately 500 at the moment) has been the most difficult to overcome.

An Editor was appointed to edit and collate the various articles, news items, reports etc. supplied by members. The problems of the first printing and subsequent distribution has to be overcome. We had, some time ago, afforded ourselves the luxury of purchasing a second-hand electric typewriter and this provided us with the stencils from which a local, non-profit printing co-operative produced our Newsletter and other items, such as the programmes of courses.

In the meantime, a newly formed Community Services Group, which had a number of varied but important functions, analysed our membership list and produced, by appealing for volunteers, a group of people willing to distribute the Newsletter in their 'arrondissement'. A very few copies still have to be posted out to people in outlying districts or Life Members living outside Cambridge but this did not break the bank. Thus we have established a really satisfactory and close communications system with our members. We feel this is one of the main achievements of the year. The fact that we are going to have these regular contacts with members also means that we shall be able to keep in touch with housebound people, and perhaps learn if and when it becomes necessary to act as a link with members who require help and assistance, without in any way interfering with their independence. It has taken a long time to establish this network and it is by no means perfect but we are improving it and learning all the time. For instance, a system is required to add and change addresses of members moving in and out of our ranks. All this has to be dealt with in the most efficient manner as a disappointed member is one who, in Cambridge, receives his copy of the Newsletter a day later than his or her friend in another part of the city.

Another series of ventures, closely connected with the Community Services Committee, is at present only in the planning stage. It is hoped to set up a 'Befriending Service', to be available to members during periods of bereavement and other personal difficulties. It is only natural that an organisation such as the University of the Third Age should see this sort of function as one that comes naturally and will be a very important part of our service to members.

It is worthwhile noting that we have already established seminars held in the homes of housebound tutors. The first one

to start this series was a study group looking at the History of Apartheid in South Africa. The tutor is a lady, Mrs Franklin, who had lived for many years in that country and on returning to this country and settling in Cambridge became an enthusiastic member of the Cambridge U3A but found, because of her disabilities, that it was difficult for her to attend seminar groups. She therefore offered to lead a group on a subject with which she was concerned and knowledgeable, to take place in her own home. The Fine Arts Group also deserves particular mention. The Painting group started with two pupils and now has more than twenty, which means running three sessions per week to cope with the demand. It is symptomatic of the tremendous response by Cambridge to the Third Age idea that an exhibition put on by the Fine Arts Classes and staged at the Central Library, proved to be an enormous success. The Mayor and Mayoress of Cambridge were among many other leading dignitaries who attended the preview. When the idea of the exhibition was first mooted, many other sections of U3A asked to be allowed to join in and display examples of their work. Among them were the Chinese study group who presented brush painted or written Chinese poems and there were poems produced by our 'Writers' Circle'. A small showcase made up by our Nutrition Seminar contained diet study sheets, recipe books and other artifacts, showing how eating habits have changed over the past decades. A collage of photos depicted a trip to Hadrian's Wall undertaken by the History group.

These are, in brief, the major academic activities in Cambridge. We are however, running other activities which may be looked at separately.

We encourage individual groups to undertake their own ventures into the country or even, as happened recently, abroad. Our Travel Club, jointly with the French study circle, arranged a week's tour to the Loire Valley in France. They were welcomed by a local branch of the Université du Troisième Age, thanks to a liaison arranged between our senior French tutor and the corresponding group in France. We intend to extend these kinds of outings, based on the interests of different study groups, and feel they will become more successful than just the usual travel club ideas.

We have a very active Social Activities group in Cambridge which is comprised of a number of sections. The main Social Committee is responsible for organising visits to theatres and other functions. This has been very successful and has so far offered regular trips to the National Theatre in London and to Stratford on Avon and other places. The Committee has also

been responsible for the larger functions, such as our annual Christmas Dinner held at one of the Colleges in Cambridge.

An offshoot of the main group consists of a band of volunteers who run smaller functions such as Tutors' Receptions. These are particularly important in a situation like we have here in Cambridge where literally dozens of scholars, professors and other voluntary teachers give so much of their time to the University of the Third Age and the only time for meeting everyone engaged in the running of the organisation is this twice-yearly get-together. In the summer it is in the form of a Garden Party and in the winter we have a Christmas drinks party. This helps to cement the close relationships needed to continue the great work done by everybody and enables us to say thank you.

The Sports section has now been established for six months. There is a gathering once every week in the local Sports Hall where from 12 to 20 people meet to play short tennis, squash, table tennis and so on, or to do yoga. Although normally ignored by the local press, this group has caught the imagination of the Cambridge newspaper who have done a very complimentary write-up. We consider it very important, for reasons which are obvious, to foster the physical activities of our institution and we are trying to persuade larger numbers to take part. We do have a separate swimming section in which the numbers are mounting all the time, with currently over 40 participants, and we are finding it difficult to cope with their enthusiasm.

The first term in 1983 saw the start of another new venture.... a Luncheon Club. This is really a social club that meets in a local hall once a week over a home made snack-lunch, for the purpose of exchanging news and simply getting together. This has proved to be highly popular and we have now connected a Chess Club to it which takes place in the same premises immediately after lunch. The Chess Club was originally planned as a monthly activity but demand has now turned it into a fortnightly meeting. A Bridge Club has also been recently established.

At the close of the Easter Week in March 1982, participants, and visitors from outside Cambridge, were invited to become 'Life Members' of the University of the Third Age in Cambridge. The fee was £5.00. There are now well over 500 Life Members. In addition, U3A local members who wish to participate in any number of activities on offer are asked to pay an annual subscription of £20.00. This can be paid in instalments or may be waived in the case of personal difficulties. This forms the basic income of U3A Cambridge and is used to rent and run the small office, pay for correspondence and communications, and,

where necessary, pay rent on premises for activities. Besides this, we have held two fund raising events during 1983, one a very well attended garden party at which goods and teas were sold and, the other, a stall in connection with the local 'Care Bazaar' held in the Guildhall in Cambridge. The proceeds, modest at this stage, are kept in a separate account and are earmarked 'Building Fund'. This represents our hopes of in future having a home of our own. At the present time we have an office which is much too small for our needs. We continually need to find and negotiate for the use of many different venues for our activities. We are in a constant state of anxiety lest we shall one day find that we can neither obtain or afford to obtain, the kinds of rooms we need in order to continue to provide all the activities outlined above. The running of our current programme, in literally dozens of different locations throughout the city, with only a handful of volunteers could be described as being 'multi-phrenic', let alone schizophrenic. We pray that this miracle will continue just a little longer so that a permanent solution, both in terms of personnel and accommodation, can be found. This is a constant theme of concern in our deliberations.

It always seems that this complicated administrative system is something of a miracle. All activities are organised by volunteers. A very elaborate Organisational Chart has been drawn up based vaguely on personal administrative experience as well as experience gleaned from other voluntary involvements. I have tried to adapt this to the U3A where no precedent existed, but, on the other hand, there is an enormous fund of goodwill among the members. That goodwill has proved to be decisive and, with a great deal of improvisation and inspiration, we managed to make the University work along the lines originally envisaged.

Today we have reached the stage where a nucleus of permanent, paid staff is essential to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. It will consist of a half-time secretary, a part-time Technical Assistant and an Administrator with experience in education. At the time of writing, we have so far found only our secretary. The Technical Assistant is the next step. This will be someone with a car, capable of doing all the practical jobs such as delivering posters, collecting material from the printers, operating our projector and other equipment used in lectures, preparing classrooms, moving blackboards and the thousand and one other things associated with running a programme of this kind. Finally we will appoint the administrator who will help with the contact and liaison with tutors and seminars, the supervision of classes, timetables and so on.

Chapter 9

THE THIRD AGE PROJECT IN DEVON

FRANK WATSON

After joining the navy at fifteen and retiring thirty years later as lieutenant-commander, Frank Watson began research at the Dartington Institute into the needs of early retired and redundant workers. Now he is Director of the Dartington Third Age Project and Community Programme Agency, covering many groups and activities throughout South Devon.

A scheme funded by the Nuffield Foundation and the European Social Fund in Totnes, Devon, differs considerably from many other Third Age Groups. Originally the New Horizons Project for Mature Redundant Workers and Early Retired persons, the management committee was persuaded by Michael Young not only to adopt the philosophy of the University of the Third Age but also its title. Despite misgivings, this was agreed, but without 'University', and chiefly because no member of the committee could think of a better name. Today the 'Third Age Project' is well known amongst the mature unemployed, but is more popularly known as T. A. P., although we have dispensed with the logo showing that instrument and the associated drip.

The project aims to encourage self-help and self-reliance amongst the mature unemployed and retired people. One may ask who is considered mature and who decides? This is, of course, an area for flexibility, or perhaps, more truthfully, indecision. A guide line of forty plus was established but here and there we do have some very young-looking mature people. The date on the bottle does not always indicate a mature wine.

Initially the pilot project was to serve the towns of Totnes, Buckfastleigh and Paignton, including the immediate rural areas. Finding premises for the activities proved no problem. In Totnes we rented some rooms as a base, to be open when needed, at least from 9-5 Mondays to Fridays. Paignton provided two

community minded people, in the form of the Methodist Minister (formerly an industrial chaplain) and the Warden of the Community College. Both had premises suitable for our needs. Not only do we make full use of their premises, we make full use of their expertise as well. They really have contributed so much and become very involved. Buckfastleigh has a Y.M.C.A. which also has a very understanding and helpful caretaker.

That takes care of the original concept, but like any well nurtured plant - and the project was well cared for by Michael Young and the Dartington Institute - the seedling began to sprout sideshoots. There were even some seeds being carried on the air via TV and radio, to be planted in many parts of the country. There are now no fewer than nine other groups in Devon using a variety of premises. There are also eight groups in other parts of the country which have developed from the seeds grown in Devon, with many other contacts being made.

On several occasions we have been asked 'Could the principles of TAP be applied in an Urban areas?' One interviewer said our project was middle class, and would not work amongst the blue collar workers of the Midlands? The answer, I believe, is that it would work anywhere. With the right sort of motivation, it could be successful anywhere in the world, let alone the Midlands.

What does the Third Age Project do? It was set up to meet the need of the unemployed and the retired to achieve mutual self-help and reliance. There are just so many needs that, after two years, we are still identifying new ones. Initially, in November 1981, a survey was carried out amongst a hundred mature people who lived in the pilot area. The results of that survey showed that there were nine main areas of need. These were:- i. Support; ii. Information; iii. Training; iv. Education; v. Arts and Crafts; vi. Voluntary Work; vii. New Enterprises; viii. Transport; ix. Employment. The areas have not been listed in any supposed order of priority, because, to different people in different towns, there were so many factors affecting that priority. However, they are in some semblance of order.

i-vi. are functions of the Third Age Project.

vii. is covered by a Business Development Service.

viii. led to the founding of the Dartington and Totnes Omnibus Company Limited.

iv. was originally covered by an informal job brokerage, but now includes a placement agency under Community Programmes.

The whole concept has now become the Third Age Project, still aimed at the mature, but of necessity covering a wider age span.

Early in the initial survey it became obvious that a main function of any project for the mature unemployed would be support, whether that support was in the form of person to person counselling, the formation of support groups, or just facilitating social contact.

South Devon is a trap for mature redundant workers from the Midlands and the North. They wish to perpetuate the holidays they have enjoyed whilst still earning! What simpler than to sell up and buy a smaller place in South Devon. The social security payments are the same, north, east, south or west. Of course, they can get seasonal work to supplement their finances or so they think! This leads to a lot of mature people, in strange surroundings, without family or friends and rapidly diminishing savings. It also leads to the highest proportion of the population drawing retirement pensions, more even than the south or south east seaside resorts and lovely places like Scarborough. Over thirty one per cent of the population around Torbay draw their retirement pension. It is amazing the number who find that the first real social contact in the area comes from a Third Age Group. Initially with two counsellors, of very different backgrounds and training, the counselling service was strained to the limit. Courses in basis counselling skills were organised and a number of volunteers identified to help. No matter what importance we place upon counselling, and it has its place, like so many other groups, the social contacts created or engineered prove invaluable to most people.

Perhaps here is a good place to explain why there has been no talk of members. There is no formal membership and anyone who wishes to involve themselves is welcome. Many mature people are fed up with the amount of irrelevant paper that comes through their letter boxes and just do not bother to read the title let alone the summary of what subject is covered. It seems that less of the essential information is reaching those for whom it was intended. Daily, often in the course of idle banter, a need for information comes to our attention. Every group meeting produces numerous requests for information and TAP now has a Resource and Information Centre to meet this vital need. The TAP News which is produced monthly has an increasing circulation. It is this Newsletter that is intended as the corner stone of the Information Service.

Training as distinct from education is something that mature people seem willing to accept in small doses. What TAP has found are certain areas where training is nominal but support continuous and these areas fill a void in the average older persons training. For example, our one day Self Presentation course

includes: How to set up a job search; Letters of application; Personal Information Charts or C.V.; Interview techniques. Ongoing support from this course has helped many to find employment. On our first course we had eleven people. In the plenary session the question was asked 'How many of us do you think will find employment within the next year,' The optimistic course organiser said six; today eight of that course are in full time employment.

Another area was bookkeeping for those who were producing goods at home for sale or were thinking of setting up a new enterprise. Many crafts people found that with the help of experienced accountants and bookkeepers they were able to present their books or accounts to likely sources of finance. Of course they had a far greater success rate than before. The training provided by other bodies was advertised in a way which appealed to the mature and many more are now deciding to take part in training schemes.

Education is on the whole well provided for by existing centres of learning in this area. It came as a slight surprise to find that to the mature in particular, adult education was considered: Middle Class; Middle Age; Middle of the road. It's now more popularly called 'the 3M service'. Much effort has been put into working with Community Colleges and Adult Education Centres to dispel that image. However, when a class of twelve comprises a solicitor, a dentist, an accountant, five teachers and two middle aged former professional ladies, it does take some encouraging to get a labourer and his wife to join. The involvement of people like Peter Grafton, Warden of the Community College, with our group in Paignton helps enormously to dispel prejudices.

With U3A this warning was sounded at Cambridge in March 1982 during Granada's filming of the Chalk Face programme. It seemed to be aimed at the middle class retired person. In fact on more than one occasion U3M has replaced U3A, that is: Upper Middle Class; Upper Middle Age; Up Market Academically. This is the prime reason that 'UNIVERSITY' was left out of this project title.

Many mature people, having left school at 14, were reluctant to return to what they thought may be classroom discipline. Sitting behind desks facing a black-board and teacher was to the vast majority less inviting than the telly or the pub. However, sitting around in a lounge listening to one of their 'friends' passing on knowledge is different, particularly between opening hours or before 'Crossroads'.

In our survey at the start of the project we had identified so many skills that mature people possessed; over 250 in fact.

Many were willing to share their skills with others. All they needed was opportunity, timing and a little encouragement. Amongst the skills now being passed on are: wood carving; pottery; knitting; glass engraving; painting in oils, pastels and water colours; marquetry; porcelain painting; gardening; house plant cultivation; local history; bookkeeping; creative writing; bridge; chess; DIY. Our French conversation group would be just as much at home across the Channel as they are in our lounge. Now they have decided to teach we 'English' their language. New groups for beginners at three centres are now active. There are many more one-off talks and we are sure many more learning groups will be formed. The will is there, the facilities are available, time has been a problem but with increased staff we look forward to our premises being fully utilised.

We should mention our computer group which although not as large as twelve months ago is still going. We started with five mature people. This grew as some brought along their children. At one time we had seventy five members from 11 years old to 76. We have now settled down to about twenty regular members age 13 to 68 in Totnes and another group in Brixham. Many of the subjects mentioned are in the arts and crafts. However, we defined those who wanted to learn or practice arts and crafts under the education banner. There were also many who wished to put their skills to more profitable use. These people meet regularly, arrange bulk purchase of materials, and take space to sell their wares at local fairs and shows. They even have their own market in the summer and for two full weeks at Christmas.

Surprisingly enough, we identified many people who wanted to undertake voluntary work. Until recently, placing them was a problem but now we are beginning to get voluntary bodies, in need of help, approaching us to assist. This is most gratifying because it is fulfilling a need on both sides. However, one never ceases to be amazed by 'man's humanity to man' - to hear 'So and so, how kind, I had such and such a problem and they helped me solve it'. That is really what the Project is all about, isn't it?

Third Age is a new enterprise but we identified so many other potential commercial enterprises that action was required. Initially we formed a group to discuss the ideas from which we identified four members who had no ambition to start a new enterprise themselves but did have a wealth of experience in business. These formed a consultancy group. Unfortunately we had seriously underestimated the demands upon their services. No volunteer could be expected to give quite so much. Further more, being a voluntary group they did not always attract official

recognition.

The next step was to form an Enterprise Trust or as we have called it a Business Development Service with a full time, salaried Development Officer. This service has an advisory council comprising business and professional people, who still give their services for free when needed. Several new enterprises have developed as a result of this service providing over 40 jobs. There are currently fifty individuals receiving some form of help in addition to those who are already started. One recognises in rural areas that small new enterprises are the only way of finding new jobs.

In rural areas the problems of transport have grown over the past decade. As public transport is withdrawn so the cost of private transport has increased. Many have 'got on their bikes'; in fact Devon, never renowned for cycling, seems to be producing cyclists by the dozen, and of all ages. Car sharing is becoming common place, and particularly pleasing is the way those attending TAP activities have responded. However, for many an economic alternative to public transport was essential. Many community transport initiatives have blossomed and faded. Third Age joined with other interested parties to try and fill this gap. The result was a new bus service provided by the Dartington and Totnes Omnibus Co. Ltd. This 'community' bus company runs a regular service to villages in the North West of Totnes from 6.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Mondays to Fridays including a special service for fifty schoolchildren. The average weekly numbers of passengers carried exceed three hundred and require two buses to maintain the services. At least seven villages would be without a transport service but for the Third Age initiative.

Last but by no means least we started an informal job brokerage service which had some success for a variety of reasons. Many employers were embarrassed by advertising jobs for mature people with so many youngsters unemployed. They are now being convinced to look for the right person irrespective of age. Using us as an agency saved management time and gave a reasonable guarantee of success.

'Ageism' as Michael Young says, is one of the fastest growing social problems of this decade. When applying for a job at the age of forty to be told 'Sorry you are too old' is not only disheartening, it is a disgrace. One of our problems is having to educate employers as to the value of experience and maturity.

Out of our desire to find work in the community for skilled hands we found the Manpower Services Community Programmes. They were looking for agents and, with our experience with the unemployed and the sponsorship of Dartington, we had the right

pedigree. Our agency will have projects providing temporary work for one thousand long term unemployed by the end of 1983.

We recently applied to the Manpower Services Commission under its voluntary Projects Programme for funding for staff and materials to help us increase our activities. Fortunately our application was successful so we now have additional materials and staff which include a Resource and Information Centre Organiser, and extension officers with clerical support. The enquiries come in with pleasurable regularity and before long those associated with our project will be in four figures. Our target is to have numbers of local groups in three figures. Michael Young perceived the need several years ago and those involved with the Programme feel privileged in helping to meet that need.

Chapter 10

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE IN SAFFRON WALDEN

JOHN JONES AND JOYCE MACELROY

John Jones, a retired deputy head teacher and writer on the history of the ballet, is now the research tutor of the Saffron Walden U3A. Joyce MacElroy has been a nurse, and physical training instructor and a Youth Play Leader: now she is the mainstay of the flourishing U3A in Saffron Walden.

Saffron Walden is a comparatively small country town in Essex which has been increasingly commuterised in recent years. Its long and varied history is mirrored in its buildings, street and school names: a ruined castle (decay not war), the largest parish church in Essex, a substantial Quaker presence and names such as de Bohun, Cromwell, Winstanley and R. A. Butler. There are well over two hundred clubs, societies and organisations serving the town and it is well provided with Evening and WEA Classes.

Joyce MacElroy, who was and is the mainspring of U3A activities in the town, was both fortunate enough and inquisitive enough to attend the Cambridge U3A Seminar in March 1982 and there she was very impressed by the idea of a learning/teaching relationship amongst Third Age people. Motivation was followed by action. Joyce talked to her many friends and acquaintances about the ideology of the U3A and found enough interest to call a preliminary meeting at the local library. There she explained the U3A concepts and found that the reception was mixed, but that there was enough support for her ideas to call a second meeting at the town's Youth and Adult Centre which was attended by a small delegation from the Cambridge U3A and about a dozen people from Saffron Walden. A small working party was set up and a series of monthly meetings was held. These meetings established that there was a clientele. Interests crystallised and the process of talent matching began. A framework for a programme of activities emerged and this was presented to

interested parties as a list of activities: there were more than ten, and they were scheduled to begin in January 1983.

Before classes actually began, an Enrolment Day was organised in the local library, one of the town's natural meeting places. The local papers were alerted, one of them published a picture of the oldest member signing on, not quite the sought-for image, but by the end of the day there were more than fifty paid up members and the range of activities had been extended. In those first days, and since, Joyce MacElroy and her working party, which was gradually elevated to the status of committee, have enjoyed enormous support from individuals, from the Essex Educational Authority, from the Warden of the local Youth and Adult centre, from the Town's Librarian and from its Mayor and from shopkeepers and others who have displayed U3A posters. Joyce MacElroy was not only the instigator but the progress chaser as well, visiting all the groups in turn, creating timetables, hiring and arranging rooms.

From the very beginning it was decided that the enrolment fee should be kept to a minimum and that it should be the only charge, its payment entitling people to attend all open meetings and as many groups or classes as they wished. The fee for the first year was set at £1 and to date there is every indication that we can work effectively at this level. If there is any increase it will be based upon room hire charges, each member of a group contributing a small sum, probably ten pence per class attended.

Costs have been low because everything has been on a voluntary basis; not even visiting speakers have been paid, and because we have been very fortunate in that we have been charged only nominal fees for the use of premises. The only substantial hiring charge to date has been for a Day Centre for an Evening Social, and that was met by a raffle. Secretarial expenses have been paid. In addition to the enrolment fees we have received £45 in donations.

To date the U3A in Saffron Walden has been a low cost exercise, but growth brings its problems. Our membership doubled in our first two terms. If this growth rate continues, then problems of communication and accommodation are likely to arise. To date, our communications have been by word of mouth and by shop window advertising, reinforced by duplicated timetables of the term's events and by the regularity of meetings. Cancellations and re-arrangements are costly in terms of time, money and frustration. We are already considering publishing a newsletter, a development which will increase running costs. The problem of accommodation, particularly for our monthly meetings, is more pressing. We find that between a third and a

half of our membership attend monthly meetings and if our membership were to double again we would be hard pressed to find low-cost meeting places large enough to cope. However, these meetings are essential to our organisation since they create a sense of belonging, of loyalty, and are a focal point for potential new members. . . . 'Come and see what happens. There will be an enrolment fee of £1 if you decide to join'. They are also of the greatest importance in keeping our members informed of what is happening in the various groups, such as the Social Group, which are continuously expanding their programmes.

Four groups have been chosen for close scrutiny. They are an academic group, a discussion group, an art and craft group and the research group. The criteria applied in making the choice have been the representative nature of the group and its illustration of the problems faced by the tutors.

The academic group is that studying German. The tutor, Mrs Jean Pitt, writes: 'the German group comprises five pupils. Of the five, two are complete beginners and three have some previous knowledge of the language - a mixed ability group. However, the non-beginners are willingly biding their time and refreshing their memories whilst the beginners are taking their first steps. As yet, nobody has dropped out. Fortunately, in view of the degree of difficulty of the language, each student has a well defined motivation to learn German and there is a genuine commitment to doing work at home. In the absence of examination-type pressure, the atmosphere is most pleasant and relaxed, a factor appreciated by both pupils and tutor. The problems of teaching mixed abilities have not surfaced, due largely to the intellect and personality of the pupils.'

The Discussion group has been more varied in membership and, at its weekly meetings, tackles four or five topics, some of which are inward looking, such as, 'Why did you join U3A?', while others draw upon the experiences of the members of the group, such as, 'What it is like living in Holland.' The tutor, Mr Robert Whybrew, reports that most of the topics centre on the local community and upon problems met by the members, but matters of more general concern such as Unemployment and CND have been discussed. The meetings are lively and the attendance varies from four to seven.

Barbara Price-Smith, the Art Tutor, reports as follows: 'we started from scratch in the old art room of the Boys' British School complete with easels and plastic palettes. Numbers have fluctuated from a maximum of twelve to a minimum of three. Members mainly wish to draw or paint but some four or five have started working on both traditional hexagonal patchwork and the

Victorian 'crazy' variety. For the last three meetings, the group has had to relinquish the Boys' British School (the site has been sold for development) and has filled in with one meeting in a member's house, which gave us a chance to work on roofs and chimneys (the proverbial room with a view), one in the local museum, which provided the members with a choice of subject, and one in the Faircroft Youth and Community Centre, which will be our regular meeting place next term.'

The founding group included some who felt that, if the title, 'U3A, Saffron Walden' was to be used, then research must be part of the whole. A Research Group was set up and its tutor, John E. Jones, reports: 'our early meetings were spent considering what to research. There was some talk of joining the U3A, Cambridge research group and taking part in their 'Telewatch' which was concerned with the way in which the older generation was portrayed on television, but it was decided, eventually, to investigate the attitudes of the U3A generation to housing. The group sought advice from Peter Laslett of Trinity College, Cambridge, and, through him, of Professor Alan Lipman of the Welsh School of Architecture. The choice was between a near replication of some existing research to help develop research skills so that more original work could be undertaken at a later date, and a more novel approach which aroused the interest of the membership as a whole. The latter course was decided upon. A questionnaire was drawn up and ten members completed it. This experience suggested that a more effective procedure would be to make the questionnaire the basis of a structured interview, the interviewers being given an instruction sheet. It is hoped that the interviews will be completed next term. When this has been done it is planned to produce a series of profiles based upon the interviews which may or may not suggest common attitudes, experiences and interests from which further lines of enquiry may develop.'

In May we were approached by a research worker from Sidhartha Films to see if we were suitable material for a programme they were preparing for the Channel Four series, 'Years Ahead.' Three meetings were held. In the first a small cross section of members talked about why they had joined the U3A and what they had got out of it. The second was a planning session and included visits to the various locations that would be used and the third was a briefing meeting. There was no script as such but an awareness of the questions. Filming took place over two days in June and the eventual television film showed various groups in session, including the Keep Fit Class, the Local History Study Group, the Art Group and the German Group. There were interviews with five members, the organiser

(Joyce MacElroy) two tutors and two students. After all the excitement, the General Meeting which was held on the day the film was shown was the worst attended of the whole year, but we were given a video of the programme. The lasting impression was one of warm co-operation from all quarters and the members were charmed by the film crew. Reactions to the film itself were very varied and an informal report is being gathered for forwarding to the film company.

Social activities and discussions figure prominently in the programme. The Students' Union is every bit as important to the students as research is to the University. The monthly Luncheon Club is particularly popular: it is very pleasant to share a meal with friendly, articulate people. The Social Group have already organised visits to stately homes, walks and shopping trips and there is every indication that this aspect of the activities will both expand and diversify.

Our third ten-week term began on September 1983. It was advertised in shop windows and in public places. All our members and all those expressing an interest in our activities are invited to attend our monthly meetings. Recruitment has been steady since the end of last term. Many of our new members are recruited by existing members, but there is a U3A Information Desk on one afternoon a week in the local library.

In conclusion, it is worth summarising the main feature of the programme. It includes German, French, Spanish, art and crafts, local history, bridge, scrabble, and 'stroll arounds' and 'saunters', while, in private homes, are based French conversation, creative writing, play reading and the history of ancient religions. It is certainly a varied and tastily flavoured diet.

Chapter 11

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE IN LANCASTER, MORECAMBE AND DISTRICT

KEITH PERCY

Keith Percy is Organising Tutor for Extra-Mural Studies at Lancaster University. An adult education specialist of varied experience, he was instrumental in setting up the Open College and Open Lectures schemes in Lancaster and the north west.

Early in 1982, Margery Morgan, soon to retire from her post as Reader in Literature at the University of Lancaster, and Keith Percy, who was head of the small Extra-Mural Studies unit in the University, made contact with the National U3A committee and they agreed to do what they could to facilitate the establishment of a U3A branch in the Lancaster area. The context appeared to be appropriate: there was known to be a significant proportion of retired people in the locality (particularly in the seaside resort of Morecambe); apart from the two small towns of Lancaster and Morecambe the population along the Lune Valley was distributed in small villages poorly serviced by public transport; and since its foundation in 1964 the University of Lancaster had sought to foster close links with its surrounding community.

The University Extra-Mural Studies office had been in existence since 1979 and had followed a clear policy of exploring new ways in which the University's teaching and other resources could be made available and useful to adult learners. The Open Lectures scheme (through which members of the public were encouraged to attend University undergraduate lectures free of charge), the development of part-time first degree provision, and the Summer Programme of holiday courses for members of the public were examples of this policy. The Extra-Mural Studies office regularly received from older people a variety of enquiries about learning opportunities and dozens each year registered under the Open Lectures scheme. As early as 1977 Keith Percy

had published the results of a small local research enquiry into education and the elderly which had emphasised the potential of older people themselves as a learning resource. This is K. A. Percy and J. G. Adams, Education and the Elderly (Lancaster Institute for Research and Development in Post-compulsory Education.)

Following newspaper stories and the distribution of leaflets, public meetings to promote interest in the U3A idea were held in Lancaster in May and June 1982. Those who attended were unanimous in their indignation at the patronising attitudes to the elderly which were prevalent in society and agreed that learning had an essential part to play in the active, healthy and happy life that many older people could, and wanted to, enjoy. They were unsure about the title 'University of the Third Age' but agreed that the attempt should be made to establish a local self-help learning association for older people, beginning with fortnightly afternoon social and discussion meetings taking place in Lancaster. They also accepted an offer by Keith Percy that his office would organise a (financially self-supporting) 'Study Day for Older People' on the University Campus to launch the local U3A association. This Study Day took place on 5 August 1982 under the auspices of the University's Summer Programme and 28 older people attended a programme of discussions/talks on local history, creative writing, microcomputers, yoga, natural history and other topics and some stayed into the evening to join in social events of the Summer Programme.

From September 1982 U3A in Lancaster and Morecambe took an established form. An executive committee was formed (membership was open to anybody who chose to come) with a chairperson who changed from meeting to meeting. Seven committee meetings were held in the first nine months. The first crucial decisions taken were that:

- (i) emphasis would be on the formation of semi-independent study groups in Lancaster, Morecambe but also, emphatically, in the rural villages where formal adult education provision was normally limited and inaccessible.
- (ii) a quarterly newsletter would be produced to serve as the communications backbone of the association.
- (iii) there would be no concept of 'membership' as such - in other words older persons could attend any U3A meeting or study group free of charge on whatever basis they and the group found convenient. There would be an optional annual payment (£3 in 1982-3) but this was only levied to guarantee the receipt of the newsletter and to cover production and postage.

(iv) the title of the association should be allowed to evolve. For the time being it was decided to work under the title 'University of the Third Age' because of its national significance. In the event, throughout the period with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the committee continued to debate this title. It did not resolve the issue to its own satisfaction but, nevertheless, it grew to prefer that the Lancaster association be described under the more anonymous 'U3A' label rather than under the full-blown title of 'University of the Third Age'.

Keith Percy attended almost all meetings of the committee in a quasi-advisory capacity. More importantly, he made available to the association the services of one of the workers on a Man-power Services Community Enterprise Programme Project based in his office at the University. Such workers were recruited from the registers of the local long-term unemployed and were paid by the MSC to work, under the direction of a sponsor, on projects of benefit to the community. The project at the University was called OPAL (Opportunities for Adult Learning) and work with U3A was a relevant development of its brief. In November and December 1982 a young OPAL worker spent the equivalent of one working day facilitating and supporting U3A, acting as secretary of the committee, producing and distributing the first newsletter, receiving subscriptions and establishing a mailing list and helping to create the first rural study groups. This young worker left the project on appointment to a permanent post and, in January, was replaced by an older man who played a similar, but more extended, role (on the basis of approximately four working days per week) until June 1983.

By January 1983 the mailing list of subscribers to the U3A newsletter was approximately thirty strong and the mailing list of those who had expressed interest in U3A over twice as long. The committee laid emphasis on having a regular U3A Monday afternoon fortnightly open meetings in the restaurant of the Duke's Playhouse in Lancaster. Soon these meetings developed the practice of moving to a nearby room to hear a talk by an invited speaker (the OPAL worker arranged a programme of invited speakers from the University of Lancaster and from the community). Attendance at these meetings was never more than twenty, and often less, and the committee readily identified their primary problem, as a nascent and unfamiliar voluntary organisation, to be that of catching the public's eye, of promoting public awareness of their objectives and activities. The strategy adopted was that of orchestrating a press campaign in the local newspapers and on the local radio stations, but not before 'there was something on the ground' (that is, a range of U3A activities)

about which the journalists could write.

In February 1983 a press release was issued which, among other things, advertised the establishment of nine U3A study groups in Lancaster, Morecambe and in villages and small towns to the north and east of Lancaster. Two of these groups had been functioning successfully for some months. The others were 'established' in the sense that an individual (normally an older person) had been found who agreed to lead one or more initial meetings around a particular topic or subject area in the hope that a study group could be formed which would develop its own dynamic and procedures. Meeting places were people's homes, community or adult centres and a local school. Topics or subject areas included creative writing, local history, music appreciation and literature. In no case was the exchange of money involved. There were no tutor fees because there were no tutors; there were no accommodation fees because the Extra-Mural Studies office and the OPAL worker successfully negotiated with the local authority and local centres that such fees were inappropriate; and thus there were no costs to be passed on to U3A participants as attendance/enrolment fees.

The February press campaign was very successful in the amount of press and local radio coverage achieved. Some of the press stories were of the nature 'Old Folks go Back to School'. Others more responsibly and accurately recounted the details of U3A largely in the words used in the press release. One or two articles latched emphatically and stridently on to the title of the association and clamoured insistently about a new 'University coming to Lancashire' or a 'new kind of University specially for the elderly'. The OPAL worker was the recipient of all requests for information about U3A and it was his task to inform interested enquirers about the Lancaster town meetings, the rural study groups, relevant activities of the University of Lancaster and other agencies and identify the potential for forming new study groups from those who wished to be associated with the scheme. The number of paid subscribers grew steadily and, in a variety of formats, seven of the nine study groups developed a continuing existence. One of the unforeseen consequences of the publicity was the incidence of enquiries from relatively far afield (South Cumbria coast, Fylde coast, Central Lancashire, Preston). There was no way in which a Lancaster-based voluntary association could extend its interests over such long distances. These enquirers received polite and, as far as possible, helpful telephone calls or letters from the OPAL worker.

It is interesting that simultaneous with the emergence of the Lancaster and Morecambe U3A (which was essentially, at this

stage, a voluntary association receiving impetus and moral and material support from a major educational institution and the services of a paid worker temporarily employed in that institution) there was developing, a few miles away, the Caton and Brookhouse Creative Leisure Activities Association. The association developed from the energy and persistence of a few retired people in the villages of Caton and Brookhouse who were determined to increase the provision of a variety of hobby, special interest and social facilities available for older people, and to ensure that there were sufficient opportunities locally for older people to use their leisure time fruitfully. Membership of the association grew swiftly in early 1983, and dozens of older people regularly attended afternoon meetings in which a range of activities were organised. The objectives of the Caton and Brookhouse association were broader than those of U3A ('leisure' rather than 'learning' - though in reality this distinction often seemed more apparent than real); it had a defined concept of membership (those who paid a membership fee); but - in its entirely self-help and self-generating local nature - it provided an instructive parallel for the Lancaster and Morecambe U3A. In fact, the Caton and Brookhouse group came to occupy a form of adjunct status to U3A. A dozen or more members of the group paid the U3A newsletter subscription and some leading members of the Caton group regularly attended U3A committee meetings. In fact, the Caton group perceived U3A as having more 'clout', more negotiating strength, because of its links with the University of Lancaster and with the national U3A movement - in particular, with regard to achieving access to local authority accommodation.

The success of the February press campaign proved to be double-edged. At a routine liaison meeting of local statutory providers of adult education, held in the University of Lancaster in March, it became apparent that some of the Responsible Body and local authority agencies felt disquiet at some of the apparent activities and considerable local publicity of U3A. Keith Percy offered to organise an informal meeting with members of the local U3A committee for those providers who wished to attend. The meeting duly took place in early April, with six members of the U3A present and representatives of three Universities, three local authorities and three areas of the WEA. Among the issues and concerns raised by the representatives of the statutory providers present were

(i) possible confusions among potential adult students which might be caused by the title 'University of the Third Age' and by local U3A publicity

(ii) the question of 'standards' in U3A self-programming study

groups

- (iii) the possibility that U3A might recruit participants who would otherwise have joined Responsible Body classes
- (iv) the suggestion that U3A should not extend its activities beyond the immediate Lancaster and Morecambe area without prior consultation with statutory providers
- (v) the fear that politicians might take a simplistic view of voluntary associations such as U3A which might affect the public funds available for provision of adult education.

On the other hand, certain of the representatives of the statutory providers present said that they were impressed by the vitality and development of U3A, that they believed strongly in the principles of self-help in adult education and that there were ways in which the development of U3A could be beneficial to statutory providers.

Before the informal meeting ended, members of U3A present offered to take back for discussion in their committee the possibility of an invitation to representatives of certain providers to attend U3A open committee meetings at certain key points in the year so that plans could be discussed (this was later agreed). Moreover, all present agreed to consider further the possibilities of mutual support; for example, that a U3A study group might (if an appropriate point were reached) be transformed into a WEA class or that a WEA class which failed to recruit a viable number could survive as a U3A study group.

By May 1983 U3A in Lancaster, Morecambe and area had reached a further plateau. Over a hundred older people were involved in the study groups and Monday meetings; about 50 were paying subscribers to the newsletter. The U3A committee had formalised itself with an elected chairperson, Nancy Cretney, and was examining a draft constitution. Its activities were quite well known nationally: Keith Percy was receiving regular requests from other parts of the country for information on how U3A-type associations could be established and on the kinds of relationship possible between U3A groups and other agencies. However, the committee had long known that in June 1983 the current phase of the OPAL Project would end and that, thereafter, there would be no MSC worker available to facilitate and to co-ordinate activities. Keith Percy had also indicated that his office would continue to support U3A as much as possible, but would leave initiatives to the association itself. The committee decided to ask the OPAL worker to organise in June a U3A Annual General Meeting, associated with some 'event' or 'Open Day' for older people, which would (hopefully) attract a large attendance and further press coverage. It would coincide with the end of the first year of

existence of the local U3A and would, it was hoped, start off the second year with additional recruits and a renewed burst of activity.

Some obstacles were found to stand in the way of the June 'event'. An outcome of the disquiet among some of the local authority agencies which followed the February press campaign was that the local branch of NATFHE (the union for many adult and further education tutors) had expressed a wish not to co-operate with the local U3A association. The branch's grounds were that it feared that the development of free U3A study groups would affect the employment opportunities of part-time adult education tutors. The immediate effect of this NATFHE decision was that it proved impossible to find appropriate town centre local authority premises in which to stage the U3A 'event' and AGM. Thus, the 'event' was moved out to the University, three miles from the town centre and became the University of Lancaster 'Open Day for Older People' on 22 June 1983.

The 'Open Day' was a great success. A large-scale exhibition was organised of educational, social and leisure opportunities for older people in which the local U3A had three display stands to publicise the activities of study groups. A programme of short talks by University lecturers on their specialisms and visits to University departments was available. Towards the end of the afternoon representatives of local adult education providers were invited to speak about their provision for older people, and then the local U3A association held its AGM. Well over one hundred people travelled to the University for this 'Open Day' - yet more evidence of the felt need of large numbers of older people in this semi-rural area for extension of the opportunities for their involvement in learning activity from which cost, travelling difficulties, and administrative regulations about viable class sizes often debarred them.

It is too early to claim that the Lancaster, Morecambe and district U3A has succeeded or failed, and it would be similarly premature to make claims one way or the other, on the basis of the Lancaster experience, about the ideas which are given wide currency by the National U3A Committee, the Centre for Policy on Ageing and Age Concern.

Certainly one can say that some of the rural study groups near Lancaster worked well and provided worthwhile social and learning experiences for participants. In one local history group, for example, U3A participants took turns at presenting their reading and research to each other, and in organising field trips and maintained a high level of activity and enthusiasm throughout

the year without the external support of 'tutors'. In a creative writing group one experienced U3A participant took on the role of convenor and tutor and within a few months one of the other participants had succeeded in having her own work published. The Lancaster U3A experience suggests that it is not possible to be prescriptive about the form a study group should take, but that it would be useful to have available learning materials, and case studies of successful groups elsewhere, for consultation by those attempting to establish a new group. A crucial practical point, also, is the nomination of a contact person for each group (who is well informed about all present and future activities of the group) and a network of communication between contact persons and a central point of information which can be identified in all publicity and to all enquirers.

The OPAL worker in the University of Lancaster Extra-Mural Studies office fulfilled the latter function for the Lancaster, Morecambe and district U3A. A crucial issue which has run throughout the existence hitherto of this U3A is the proper balance to be maintained in an infant voluntary association between the effort and initiatives of the members and the support and guidance of the public educational institution which provided the original dynamic. Members of this U3A association were very happy to accept whatever help the University and the Manpower Services Commission could offer. For many, the ideas of self-help and self-direction were means rather than ends; the major goals were increasing the accessibility to themselves, and to others like them, of actual learning opportunities (however provided) and of improving their access to major educational facilities such as those of the local University. Thus, in the period under question, there was little internal thrust in the Lancaster, Morecambe and district U3A towards independence and self-support. In the long run, it may prove to be a bad thing for so many of the original U3A functions to have been carried out by the paid, almost full-time MSC OPAL worker, based in the University. It may be that the close (in some ways dependent) relationship between the local U3A and the University of Lancaster will have been irretrievably institutionalised. Yet the nearby and contemporaneous impressive local experience of the Caton and Brookhouse Creative Leisure Activities Association shows that self-help and self-dependence among groups of older persons can work remarkably well.

Of course, it can easily be seen that the Lancaster, Morecambe and district U3A entered into the political arena as soon as it grew to a certain size and organised a press campaign. Statutory providers of adult education are conscious of their

marginal claims on the public purse and their marginal status in the public mind. They are badly affected by public expenditure cuts, staff and material resource reductions and declining morale. Some providers in the Lancaster area were understandably (and, therefore, in that sense rightly) irritated and worried by the brash and successful local U3A press publicity. It is interesting that the perceptions of some of them were of a parvenue amateur 'provider' entering into competition for what was believed to be the limited pool of adults available for participation in class-room based adult education. Moreover, according to these perceptions, the newcomer was using unfair means - it could advertise itself as free because (unlike the Responsible Bodies) it had free access to certain accommodation and (unlike all of them) it did not insist on professional standards of paid tuition.

Evidently these perceptions were inappropriate and misinformed. But with hindsight it can be claimed that the reaction of some of the statutory providers was predictable and could have been prevented. The University of Lancaster's Extra-Mural Studies office and the local U3A committee could have consulted and informed the local providers in advance of the press campaign. For U3A associations and groups, properly understood, are not in competition with statutory providers. Rather, they are concerned with educational concepts and practices which do not predominate in formal provision. When all statutory providers accept that adult learning does not necessarily have to be institutionalised, professionalised 'provided' and contained in a 'programme', when the real physical and material barriers between older people and access to formal educational opportunities are removed, when the needs of older people for learning involvement and their potential as educators and educational resources are generally recognised, then - but not before then - will it be legitimate to question whether the existence of 'University of the Third Age' associations and groups is justified.

Keith Percy's conclusions could well serve for the whole of this study, for he very properly brings us full circle. U3A groups are, as he reminds, 'concerned with educational concepts and practices which do not predominate in formal provision'. Indeed, they were developed, in part, because of that inadequacy and, indirectly, as a standing reminder of that absence. When the golden day dawns upon which Keith Percy's three obstacles - institutionalised programming, barriers to access, the non-acknowledgment of 'elderly' potential - are removed, then will the distinction between

state and self-help provision be pleasingly blurred. All U3As will begin to look like schools and colleges, and all the schools and colleges will begin to look like U3As. What Michael Young called 'the grand sharing between all the citizens of the nation' would be the glorious outcome. These U3A activists hope that the tiny steps described here are steps in that direction. We have outlined the theory and detailed the practice, for much thought as well as much activity has gone into the primitive stirrings of British U3As. But deliberately, no attempt has been made to judge to what extent their practical implementation has matched the designs and aims of the idealogues. It is for others to assess the present degree of compatibility between ideal and actuality. Suffice it to say that, as for the future, U3A activists are determined to clarify the definitions by relation to practice, and improve the application by reference to sharper analysis of the idea.

INDEX

- Adams, J.S., 147
- Advisory Centre for Education, 92
- Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education, 93
- Age Concern England, 61, 67, 112, 117, 152
- Allman, J.F., 89
- Allman, P., 17, 72, 73, 89, 91, 107
- Antonini, Prof., 69
- Argentine, 66
- Aries, P., 61
- Arlin, P.K., 75, 78, 89
- Australia, 21

- Bedford, 66
- Belgium, 63, 66, 70
- Berlin, 70
- Bernier, R., 67
- Beth Johnson Foundation, 70, 98
- Beverfeldt, E., 42
- Beveridge, Lord, 102
- Bielby, D.D.V., 74, 90
- Birmingham, 66, 95, 98-9
- Brassen, P., 63
- British Broadcasting Corporation, 41, 44, 47, 108-9, 121, 125
- Bristol, 119-20
- Brixham, 138
- Brixton, 103
- Buckfastleigh, 120, 134

- Caen, 33-8
- California, 13
- Cambridge, 6, 7, 19, 20, 26-32, 94, 108-11, 137
- Cambridge Group, Population Studies, 20, 34
- Cambridge U3A, 6, 7, 19, 20, 108-11, 117, 119, 120, 122, 124, 127-33, 141, 144
- Canada, 21, 61, 63, 66, 107
- Caton and Brookhouse, 150-3
- Centre for Policy on Ageing, 67, 152
- Channel Four Television, 41, 125, 144
- Charleroi, 63, 70
- China, 66
- College of Health, 103-4
- Colorado, 69
- Community Education Department Centre, 91, 96-8
- Consumers Association, 92, 102-4
- Copenhagen, 37, 40, 48
- Coventry, 91, 95-7
- Cretny, N., 151

- Dartington, 134, 135, 138
- Datan, N., 89

- Denmark, 28, 32, 39-40
 Devon (Third Age Project),
 19, 104, 116, 120-1, 134-40
 Dubos, R, 54
 Einstein, 85
 Elderhostel, 24, 25, 28, 38,
 66
 Engels, F, 89
 Essex, 141, 142

 Fleming, A, 54
 Florence, 69
 Florida, 69
 Forum on the Rights of
 Elderly People to Educa-
 tion (FREE), 33, 67, 68,
 107-8
 France, 21, 28, 29, 32,
 55, 109
 France, Universities of the
 Third Age, 35-8, 51-7,
 61-7, 108, 120, 131
 Franklin, Mrs. 127
 Freire, P, 80, 82-6, 89
 Frentz, R, 63
 Freud, S, 85
 Futerman, V, 18, 127

 Gdansk, 70
 Ghana, 66
 Gilligan, C, 79-80, 89
 Glasgow, 15
 Gliwice, 70
 Gloucestershire, 115-6
 Grafton, P, 137
 Grainge, P, 116
 Gramsci, A, 83-4, 89
 Greenwich, 103
 Grenoble, 51, 64, 65, 108
 Groombridge, B, 94

 Hackney, 103
 Hall, G.S, 60
 Harpenden (Herts), 6, 115, 117,
 119, 120, 122

 Harris, F, 57-8
 Harvard, 69, 80
 Help the Aged, 67, 111
 Higher Education, United King-
 dom, 4, 9, 12, 20, 22, 24,
 25, 26, 28, 30, 31-5, 38,
 150-2
 Home-based Early Learning
 Project (HELP), 97, 99, 100
 Hounslow, 97
 Huppert, F, 73, 89
 Hyde, 114

 Illitch, I, 52
 International Association of
 U3As (IAUTA), 52, 63, 66,
 69, 70
 Italy, 21, 63, 66, 69

 Kansas City, 69
 Karran, S, 96, 99
 Katowice, 70
 Kohlberg, L, 79, 89
 Krakow, 70
 Kuhn, D, 89
 Kuhn, M, 62

 Labouvie-Vief, G, 73, 78, 89
 La Louvière, 67
 Lambeth, 103
 Lancaster and Morecambe, 19,
 111, 113, 114, 121, 125, 146-54
 Laslett, P, 7, 17, 20, 72, 107-9,
 122, 144
 Leicester, 112
 Lickona, T, 89
 Lille, 63
 Lipman, A, 144
 Liverpool, 95
 Lodz, 70
 Lohman, N, 89
 London, 61, 102, 107, 116-7,
 119-20, 124
 Lyons, 65

- MacElroy, J, 18, 141,
 142, 145
 Mackie, K, 89
 McLellan, D, 89
 McPhee, J, 67-8
 Madrid, 63
 Manchester, 115, 117, 120
 Manpower Services Comm-
 ission, 114, 117, 139,
 140, 148, 151, 153
 Marcinelle, 70
 Marx, K, 85, 89
 Mayence, S, 61, 67
 Mid-Wales, 114, 115
 Midwinter, E, 3, 94, 99,
 102, 108, 111, 112, 119
 Milan, 69
 Milton Keynes, 103
 Moncton, 67
 Mons, 67
 Montaigne, 56-7
 Montgomery, 114, 115
 Morgan, M, 146
 Moshman, D, 75, 78, 89
 Mulhouse, 64
 Murphy, J.M, 79-80, 89
 Mutual Aid Centre, 92, 102

 Namur, 63
 Nancy, 63-5, 69
 National Consumer Council,
 92, 102
 National Extension College,
 37, 41, 92, 111, 125
 National Institute of Adult and
 Continuing Education, 67
 Neugarten, B.L, 75, 78-81,
 89
 Newtown, 114, 115
 New York, 13, 69
 New Zealand, 21
 Nice, 63
 Nivelle, 67
 Northampton, 98-9
 Norton, D, 18, 107-8

 Norway, 28, 39-40, 42
 Norwich, 112
 Nottingham, 70, 125
 Nusberg, C, 66

 Open University, 4, 20, 25, 26
 31, 36-8, 61, 113-7, 122,
 146, 154
 Opolu, 70
 Oslo, 42
 Oxford, 123

 Paignton, 134, 136
 Palmer, R, 114
 Papalia, D.E, 74, 90
 Paris, 64
 Percy, K, 18, 146-8, 151, 154
 Perry, W.I, 80, 90
 Peuziat, J, 64-5
 Philibert, M, 17, 51, 62, 64,
 67, 72, 107, 108
 Piaget, J, 74-8, 90
 Pitt, J, 143
 Poland, 63, 66, 69, 70
 Portugal, 21
 Posnan, 70
 Powys, 114, 115
 Pre-retirement Assoc., 28, 67
 Price-Smith, B, 143-4

 Quebec, 63

 Radcliffe, D, 17, 61
 Rennie, J, 17, 91-2, 107
 Riegel, K, 76-8, 81, 90
 Rigge, M, 102
 Riva del Garda, 63
 Robinson, F, 96-7
 Rolla, 69
 Rome, 69
 Russell, A.F, 57-8

 Saffron Walden, 19, 119-22,
 124, 141-5
 St. Etienne, 64

St. Helens, 102
 St. Louis, 69
 San Diego, 69
 Schaie, K. W., 73, 90
 Seneca, 57
 Sherbrooke, 67
 Sherrington, Sir, C, 47
 Sinnott, J. D., 74, 90
 Southgate, V, 98
 Southwark, 103
 Spain, 63, 66, 68-9
 Stevenage, 112, 115, 119, 120
 Stoke-on-Trent, 98-9
 Surrey, 113, 123
 Sussex, 120, 121, 124, 125
 Swarc, H, 69
 Sweden, 28, 33, 39, 40,
 66, 82
 Switzerland, 63, 66
 Szczecin, 70

 Torbay, 136
 Toronto, 68
 Totnes, 134, 138-9
 Toulouse, 51-2, 62-3, 70
 Tournai, 67
 Trento, 69
 Turin, 69

 Umea, 37
 Union of French U3As (UFUTA),
 63-6, 68
 USSR, 70
 USA, 13, 21, 24-9, 38, 63, 66,
 69, 72, 73
 University Extra-mural Depart-
 ments, 4, 24, 28, 31, 38, 61,
 113-7, 122, 146, 154
 U3A DIY, 6, 111-2, 125
 U3A National Committee (Third
 Age Trust), 6, 10, 92, 104,
 108-13, 117-9, 146, 152
 U3A Prospectus, 7-8, 109-10,
 122

 Valladolid, 68
 Vellas, P, 51-2, 62, 67, 67
 Verdu, C, 9, 69
 Voluntary and Christian
 Service, 116

 Wakefield, 119
 Warsaw, 69, 70
 Watson, F, 18, 134
 Western Isles, 95
 Western Ontario, 61, 68
 West Germany, 28, 66, 70
 Whybrew, R, 143
 Workers Educational Assoc-
 iation, 4, 14, 28, 31, 35,
 38, 109, 113, 114, 141, 150-1
 Wroclaw, 69

 Yeovil, 112, 119, 120
 Yorkshire, 120
 Young, M, 17, 72, 91-2, 107
 112, 134, 135, 139-40, 155



